"Great Writers."

EDITED BY

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LIFE OF THACKERAY.

LIFE

OF

W. M. THACKERAY.

BY

HERMAN MERIVALE

AND

FRANK T. MARZIALS.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

THIS little book was begun by Mr. Merivale, who, however, found himself unable to finish more than the first six chapters, and the supplementary chapter, on Thackeray's friendships, which he had intended to incorporate into his narrative. The task of completing the volume then devolved on me. As Mr. Merivale was not primarily responsible for the choice of his successor, and has had no opportunity of seeing what I have written, it will be understood how anxious I am that none of my errors of omission or commission should, however lightly, be laid to his charge.

Through the kindness of Thackeray's family, and especially of his daughter, Mrs. Ritchie, certain "Memorials of the Thackeray family," collected by his relatives, Mrs. Bayne and Mrs. Pryme, were placed unreservedly in Mr. Merivale's hands, and, more reservedly, in mine. These Memorials, in so far as they referred to Thackeray, had reference especially to his youth, and use of them has been made in the earlier of the

following chapters, which contain information and passages of correspondence not hitherto published. My own task has been to take up the narrative where Mr. Merivale had left it, and, with such materials as I could collect, to carry it to a conclusion.

I am sure I am doing right in expressing Mr. Merivale's thanks, as well as my own, to Mrs. Ritchie. Mr. Merivale would also, I think, have wished to express his obligation to Sir Theodore Martin and to Mr. Synge for some valuable notes and memoranda. Personally my thanks are due to Mr. Garnett for several suggestions, and for kind revision of proofs; and also to Messrs. Smith and Elder for permission to quote from Thackeray's works, and from the "Collection of Letters," published in 1887. I have, moreover, received help from the Bibliography appended to the volume entitled "Sultan Stork," and published by Redway in the same year. My other debts will be found acknowledged, either in the text, or in the foot-notes.

FRANK T. MARZIALS.

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LIFE OF THACKERAY.

CHAPTER I.

(By Herman Merivale.)

IT is a bold thing for any man, perhaps, to undertake to write a memoir of Thackeray at the present time. We lost him just a quarter of a century ago: too long a space for us to rouse the instant interest which belongs to the story but a moment closed; too short to escape from running counter to many surviving prejudices, if we may at least hope to avoid hurting a living feeling. As the mists that first surround a great figure gone, melt and disappear, it begins to assume for us something like true proportions, to promise something of what it is like to be in the eyes of an after-world, when living memory can speak of it no more, when enmities are forgotten and friendships with the dead. And at this moment, assuredly, that strange and contradictory, but vivid and magnetic personality speaks to us more than ever. Perhaps the best excuse the present writer may plead is just and only this, "I knew him, Horatio." For indeed he was to me as kind and true a friend as a man of his age could be to one of mine, and my first memory of him goes back as far as memory can. I do not

remember when I did not know and love him. In what this little book may have to say, therefore, the writer craves privilege to use the personal pronoun, to save circumlocutions and time.

It is matter of public knowledge that the materials for a full Life of Thackeray have yet to be collected. "None of this nonsense about me after my death," he said impatiently one day, tapping some biography of the admiration order that had just appeared. The expression has been construed by his daughter a little too literally, perhaps. The result has certainly been much publication that need not have been—undigging of the most private confidences, modern literary resurrectionism, little hard sayings by which he would have hated to give pain, spurious anecdotes about originals, and Heaven knows what. All this may prove difficult to correct, in time. And I doubt if any man would have more wished for an honest record in the mouths of men than Thackeray. He was the most sensitive of mortals. Conscious probably of certain defects of manner—of a certain shyness, of a certain incapacity for the "jolly good fellow" business with every first comer—he liked to be liked, and he loved to be loved. To be well thought of and well spoken of was a great desire with him; and he chafed and winced a good deal, at times, under the feeling that the world at large misunderstood him much. It could scarcely be otherwise. He had all the nervous susceptibilities, as he had all the loving-kindness, of a woman; having, indeed, about him more than any other man I have known, of Goethe's untranslatable "ewigweiblichkeit." He froze in an ungenial

atmosphere. One unwelcome presence silenced him. He was not a good talker, in the common sense, or a brilliant. Of all things his delight was to be among a small circle of his intimates, and to be allowed, if we may use the phrase, to play the fool. "Desipere in loco" was his favourite pursuit; and he fretted under a companion who could not understand or join in it. It is on record that in Cornhill days—when he was labouring at the uncongenial task of editorship, which suited him amazingly badly (it made him feel, he used to say, "like a toad under a harrow")—he would stop dead in his flow of talk when a certain chief contributor of his came into the room, with "Here's ——: now we must be serious." Yet the man in question was genial, to the world at large. Thackeray was not of the men who "have no enemies."

> "Who has no enemies, shall know no friends:
> 'A real good chap,' men say. And there it ends."

A very good fellow may sometimes be a very bad man. The two key-secrets of Thackeray's great life, as I take it, were these—Disappointment, and Religion. The first was his poison; the second was his antidote. And, as always, the antidote won. No wonder that he was disappointed. First a man of fortune, then a ruined and a struggling artist, then a journalist, recognized to the full as such even by the brothers of the craft, but, like them, very little beyond it—then at last the novelist and the famous man, he was thirty-eight before the first number of "Vanity Fair" was published. Till then he was not really known. He was but fifty-two when he died.

Born in July, 1811, he saw the other of the great twin-brethren, one half-year his junior, in the full flood of fame at twenty-four years old. Dickens was born in February, 1812. In 1841 he was banqueted in Edinburgh as no man was before, with "Christopher North" in the chair, before Thackeray knew "what he was going to be," out of the versatility of mind which is as great a danger as a charm. Dickens knew his own line from the first. And then remember, if you please, that Thackeray was a "poet," with all that that sensitive word implies—

> "Willst du in meiner Himmel mit Mir leben?
> Komm wann du willst—es wird dir offen sein!"

Men say that "Law is a jealous mistress." Assuredly Poetry is. Of all the gifts of earth, one of the rarest given to men: and Thackeray had it, though, like a wise man, he used it little. Write poetry by profession, and it may be as bad as anything you please; you are a poet. But, be you solicitor, advocate, novelist, anybody—in this England you do not count as a poet. What business have you, as a practical man, to make such an ass of yourself? Thackeray did—sometimes. The man was not a rhymer, but a poet, who wrote this translation from the German—and felt it. Not easy work to do.

> "The cold grey hills they bind me around,[1]
> And the darksome valleys lie sleeping below;
> But the winds, as they pass o'er all this ground,
> Bring me never a sound of woe.

[1] Da liegen sie alle, die grauen Höhen. (Uhland.)

Oh ! for all I have suffered and striven,
Care has embittered my cup and my feast ;
But here is the night and the dark-blue heaven,
And my soul shall be at rest.

Oh golden legends writ in the skies !
I turn towards you with longing soul,
And list to the awful harmonies
Of the Spheres as on they roll.

My hair is grey and my sight nigh gone ;
My sword it rusteth upon the wall :
Right have I spoken, and right have I done ;
When shall I rest me once for all ?

Oh blessed rest ! oh royal night !
Wherefore seemeth the time so long,
Till I see yon stars in their fullest light,
And list to their loudest song ? "

He was a poet, too, and not a rhymer, who wrote the graceful ballad which, in his usual spirit of burlesque, he chose to laugh at himself as one of his "Love Songs made easy."

" Yonder, to the kaiosk beside the creek,
Paddle the swift caique,
Thou brawny oarsman with the sun-burnt cheek.
My soul is full of love, and would hear the Bulbul speak.

Ferry me quickly to the Asian shores,
Swift bending to your oars ;
Beneath the melancholy sycamores
Hark ! what a ravishing note the love-lorn Bird outpours.

Behold the boughs seem quivering with delight,
The stars themselves more bright,
As mid the waving branches, out of sight,
The Lover of the Rose sits singing through the night.

Under the boughs I sate and listened, still
I could not have my fill:
'How comes,' I said, 'such music to his bill?
Tell me for whom he sings so beautiful a trill?'

'Once I was dumb' (thus did the Bird disclose)
'But looked upon the Rose,
And in the garden where the loved one grows
I straightway did begin sweet music to compose.'

Oh bird of Song! there's one in this caique
The Rose would also seek:
So he might learn like you to sing and speak!
Then answered me the bird of dusky beak—
'The Rose, the Rose of Love, dwells upon Leila's cheek!'"

If I have chosen for quotation these two trifles rather than the pieces which are household words with half the world, it is partly for that very reason, and partly because it is precisely in such trifles as these that Thackeray seems to me most to show where his genuine poetic gift lay, had he cared to cultivate it. He never did: his verses, like his drawings after he had given up his artistic schemes, were an amusement and a relaxation to him, and nothing else. He began with them at Charterhouse, and it is the first thing his boy-chums remembered of him. But the nameless charm of simplicity of expression, which reaches the perfection of style simply through aiming at no style at all, was certainly his in verse, as it was the crown of all his prose, even when as in "Esmond" he became archaic advisedly. His Queen Ann English in that book is realistic in its archaism, and in striking contrast to the absurd affectation of impossible phrases which passes for historic with so many. If they

are to be believed, it becomes appalling to think of the tone of everyday conversation in the spacious times of great Elizabeth. As we are quoting a little at the outset, to bring the man himself as much as possible before our readers at once, let me side by side with the specimens of his verse give this little sample of his prose out of one of his lesser "libelli"—the letters of Mr. Titmarsh to Miss Smith on the second funeral of Napoleon. It is cited here in mere example of Thackeray's simplicity. It is the quiet outcome of a quiet observation. The more I read it the less can I discover in it, in matter or in manner. But—it is perfection. Why? A whole lesson in the art of composition might be based upon its study. There were rumours in Paris that the "second funeral" might be made the occasion of some demonstration against the English; and demonstrations in Paris are apt to be—well, rather violent. Nobody was at his ease that morning in Paris; his Majesty Louis Philippe included.

Well, as he went out of doors towards the Invalides with his companion, writes Mr. Titmarsh—

"We saw the very prettiest sight of the whole day, and I can't refrain from mentioning it to my dear, tender-hearted Miss Smith.

"In the same house where I live (but about five stories nearer the ground) lodges an English family, consisting of 1, a great grandmother, a hale, handsome old lady of seventy, the very best dressed and neatest old lady in Paris; 2, a grandfather and grandmother, tolerable young to bear that title; 3, a daughter; and 4, two little great-grand or grandchildren, that may be of the age of three and one, and belong to a son and daughter who are in India.

"The grandfather, who is as proud of his wife as he was thirty

years ago when he married, and pays her compliments still twice or thrice a day, and when he leads her into a room, looks round at the persons assembled, and says in his heart, 'Here, gentlemen, here is my wife; show me such another woman in England!'—this gentleman had hired a room on the Champs Elysées, for he would not have his wife catch cold by exposing her to the balconies in the open air.

"When I came to the street I found the family assembled in the following order of march:

"No. 1. The great grandmother, walking daintily along, supported by No 3, her granddaughter.

"A nurse carrying No. 4, junior, who was sound asleep; and a huge basket, containing saucepans, bottles of milk, parcels of infant's food, certain dimity napkins, &c., a child's coral, and a little horse belonging to No. 4, senior.

"A servant, bearing a basket of condiments.

"No. 2. Grandfather, spick and span clean shaved, hat brushed, white-buckskin gloves, bamboo cane, brown great coat, walking as upright and solemn as may be, having his lady on his arm.

"No. 4, senior, with mottled legs and a tartan costume, who was frisking about between his grandfather's legs, who heartily wished him at home.

"'My dear,' his face seemed to say to his lady, 'I think you might have left the little things in the nursery, for we shall have to squeeze through a terrible crowd in the Champs Elysées.'

"The lady was going out for a day's pleasure; and her face was full of care: she had to look first after her old mother, who was walking a-head, then after No. 4, junior, with the nurse—he might fall into all sorts of danger, wake up, cry, catch cold, nurse might slip down, or Heaven knows what; then she had to look her husband in the face, who had gone to such expense and been so kind for her sake, and make that gentleman believe she was thoroughly happy; and finally, she had to keep an eye upon No. 4, senior, who, as she was perfectly certain, was about in two minutes to be lost for ever or trampled to pieces in the crowd.

"These events took place in a quiet little street leading into the Champs Elysées, the entry of which we had almost reached by this time. The four detachments above described, which had

been straggling a little in their passage down the street, closed up at the end of it, and stood for a moment huddled together. No. 3, Miss X——, began speaking to her companion, the great-grandmother.

"'Hush, my dear,' said the old lady, looking round alarmed at her daughter; '*speak French!*'—and she straightway began nervously to make a speech which she supposed to be in that language, but which was as much like French as Iroquois. The whole secret was out; you could read it in the grandmother's face, who was doing all she could to keep from crying, and looked as frightened as she dared to look. The two elder ladies had settled between them that there was going to be a general English slaughter that day, and had brought the children with them, so that they might all be murdered in company.

"God bless you, O women, moist-eyed and tender-hearted! In those gentle, silly tears of yours, there is something touches one, be they never so foolish. I don't think there were many such natural drops shed that day as those which just made their appearance in the grandmother's eyes, and then went back again as if they had been ashamed of themselves, while the good lady and her little troop walked across the road. Think how happy she will be when night comes, and there has been no murder of English, and the brood is all nestling under her wings sound asleep, and she is lying awake, thanking God that the day and its pleasures and pains are over. Whilst we were considering these things, the grandfather had suddenly elevated No. 4, senior, upon his left shoulder, and I saw the tartan hat of that young gentleman and the bamboo cane which had been transferred to him, high over the heads of the crowd on the opposite side, through which the party moved.

"After this little procession had passed away—you may laugh at it, but upon my word and conscience, Miss Smith, I saw nothing in the course of the day which affected me more—after this little procession had passed away, the other came. Et cetera."

Now what is there in this commonplace little story of a family group, on an unusual outing, told in language which troubles itself with no purist's rules, but is simply good talk and no more, which is so vivid and so effective?

According to the rules, I suppose, "*she had to look her husband in the face, who had gone to such expense,*" is not good writing-English. But it is precisely because masters like Montaigne and Thackeray are content to write good talking-language that they have such a hold upon the attentions and the affections of men. This personal style was Thackeray's charm—developed afterwards at its best in the Roundabout Papers. But it was always with him. Much as, like the rest of the world, I can admire "Becky Sharp" and "Colonel Newcome," I have never been able to look on character as Thackeray's strongest point. Some novelists' characters talk on the paper better than their authors. Some novelists talk better than their characters. In the great field called the novel —which may be didactic or funny, historic or burlesque, digressive or melodramatic or plotless—there is room for all. And Gossip Thackeray was ever behind his own characters. With Scott, I hold imaginary converse with Jeanie or with Caleb. With Dickens, I am interviewing Sam Weller or Mrs. Nickleby. With George Eliot or Miss Austen, it is their puppets who are the realities to me, not they. But with Thackeray, somehow or other, disguise himself as he may behind creations the most admirable, as so many of them are, I am always listening to Thackeray's own talk. And I don't want to stop listening. Most people do not talk on paper quite so well. For always on the same strainless quiet key, always in the same direct and supple English, he ranges from the gayest to the gravest at his master-will; from the glorious nonsense of "The Rose and the Ring"—so like the man himself in his private moods of fooling—to

the Vanity-Fair epic of the "Battle of Waterloo," to the sublime home-passion of Helen Pendennis's death. Of that last passage there is no better description than may be a little varied from some words of Thackeray's own. I know of no passage in fiction "more solemn or surprising."

The disappointment which was so much part of him rose from many things. By nature he had about him something of Antonio's melancholy. With Antonio he "held the world but as the world: a stage, where every man must play a part, and his a sad one." He hated to be misunderstood. He shrank from the littlenesses of the world, and entered into its sorrows. The problems that made Swift savage, made Thackeray sad; and he liked to tell of the woe-begone face which struck him in a crowded room in Paris, and turned out to be his own reflection in a mirror. "In part, too" (I can do no better here than repeat the delicate words of an article which appeared in the *North British Review* at the time of his death), "this melancholy was the result of private calamities. He alludes to these often in his writings, and a knowledge that his sorrows were great is necessary to the perfect appreciation of much of his deepest pathos. We allude to them here, painful as the subject is, mainly because they have given rise to stories,—some quite untrue, some even cruelly injurious. The loss of his second child in infancy was always an abiding sorrow: described in the 'Hogarty Diamond' in a passage of surpassing tenderness, too sacred to be severed from its context. A yet keener and more constantly present affliction was the illness of his wife. He married her in

Paris when he was 'mewing his mighty youth,' preparing for the great career which awaited him. One likes to think on these early days of happiness, when he could draw and write with that loved companion by his side; he has himself sketched the picture :—'The humblest painter, be he ever so poor, may have a friend watching at his easel, or a gentle wife sitting by with her work in her lap, and with fond smiles or talk or silence, cheering his labours.' After some years of marriage Mrs. Thackeray caught a fever, brought on by imprudent exposure at a time when the effects of such ailments are more than usually lasting both on the system and the nerve. She never afterwards recovered so as to be able to be with her husband and children. But she was from the first entrusted to the good offices of a kind family, tenderly cared for, surrounded with every comfort by his unwearied affection. The beautiful lines in the ballad of the 'Bouillabaisse' are well known :—

"'Ah me! how quick the days are flitting!
I mind me of a time that's gone,
When here I'd sit as now I'm sitting,
In this same place—but not alone.
A fair young form was nestled near me,
A dear, dear face looked fondly up,
And sweetly spoke and smiled to cheer me,
—There's no one now to share my cup!'"

By nature one of the most domestic of men, Thackeray was thrown upon club-life for resources, whilst his two "little girls" were yet too young to be companions for him, and "the G.," as he always called the Garrick, became a kind of home to him. An old member of that

club, when it was at the little house in King Street, remembers the time when Thackeray first joined it early in its life, and recalls his as a quiet, unobtrusive figure, with nothing to suggest the greatness to come. In the same way his friend Venables wrote of him, that when he went to Charterhouse there was nothing noticeable about him. He was not one who flowered early. It was only by degrees, my Garrick informant tells me, that the smoking-room circle of the club began to realize that they had a prophet amongst them.

Another reason for Thackeray's general sense of disappointment was, that for so many years "the women" didn't like him in his work. In his loving faith in them, that was to him a trial. The women have outgrown it now. But without wasting words, one quotation from Mrs. Jameson, a lady who favoured the world in her day with much criticism, and much opinion about other people's work, will show the oddly perverse view which many good women took of his. He understood them much better than they did themselves.

"No woman resents his Rebecca — inimitable Becky! No woman but feels and acknowledges with a shiver the completeness of that wonderful and finished artistic creation; but *every woman resents the selfish inane Amelia.* Laura in Pendennis is a yet more fatal mistake. She is drawn with every generous feeling, every good gift. We do not complain that she loves that poor creature Pendennis, for she loved him in her childhood. She grew with that love in her heart; it came between her and the perception of his faults; it is a necessity indivisible from her nature. Hallowed through its constancy, therein would lie its best excuse, its beauty and its truth. But Laura, faithless to that first affection; Laura, waked up to the appreciation of a far more manly and noble nature,

in love with Warrington, and then going back to Pendennis and marrying *him!* Such infirmity might be true of some women, but not of such a woman as Laura; we resent the inconsistency, the indelicacy of the portrait. And then Lady Castlewood. . . . Oh, Mr. Thackeray! *this will never do!* Such women may exist, but to hold them up as examples of excellence, and for objects of our best sympathies, is a fault, and proves a low standard in ethics and in art."

Verily this is most amazing nonsense. It deserves to be rescued again from the oblivion from which the *North British* dragged it, and nailed for ever to the editorial counter as a warning to critics. There is nothing so dangerous as generalities: and the "every woman resents" style (the italics being my own) is always profitable reading when the great critic, Time, has given his definite verdict. Even as I was reading the words, a fair student of "Vanity Fair" not far from me laid down her book, and expatiated on Amelia's sweet and womanly charm of truthfulness and love. And to me, who do not care for Amelia in the same degree, Laura Bell has been always a lady-love, so much so that I a little resent her after-appearances as Mrs. Pen in the later novels. I love the very Christian name for her sake. I delight in her little Warrington episode as profoundly true and human, and her return to Pen as something truer still. And oh, how I love to read through misty spectacles, over and over again as I read it now, perhaps the very shortest scene of troth-plight ever written, and the best; when Pen comes back from Blanche Amory a free man, and goes "up to Laura of the pale face, who had not even time to say, 'What, back so soon?' and, seizing her outstretched and trembling hand just as she

was rising from her chair, fell down on his knees before her, and said quickly, 'I have seen her. She has engaged herself to Harry Foker—and—and—Now, Laura?" I delight in "that poor creature Pendennis," too, with the full sanction of that same critic Time, as about the completest picture drawn of the young man of his day, as complete as Tom Jones of his. Neither all good nor all bad, but cunningly blended in the shades till one loves to meet him even as his author meant him to be, a "man and a brother"; and a very brilliant and pleasant creature to boot, well worth his Laura after his airs and graces had been knocked out of him. I like him much better than Warrington, who is what he too was meant to be, a fine sketch of strong brains and muscle to be labelled "Best Commonplace," to be the ancestor of many a hero of the type, and to delight the Mrs. Jamesons. And who shall say a word, now, against those womanliest of fair matrons, Helen and Lady Castlewood? I do protest I love them as a son. And Time too loves them. *Oh, Mr. Thackeray! this will never do!* Yes; but it did! Infelix fœmina et impar! Never prophesy till you know. How small the shade of Mrs. J. must feel. Oh these unhappy hole-pickers! Why not cherish a little healthy hero-worship, and thank God for a great man when we get him? And what becomes of the hole-pickers when they die? Do they have to go on doing it? Thackeray's "low standard of ethics and art" is a delicious thing to think upon now, for one of the greatest lay-preachers that ever breathed.

But never was author so thoroughly well lectured. Of course his art was so new that the world was not quick to

understand it. Charlotte Brontë says—"As usual he is unjust to women, quite unjust": and *The Edinburgh Review* (1848) is good enough to inform him that "having with great skill put together a creature of which the principal elements are indiscriminating affection, ill-requited devotion, ignorant partiality, a weak will and a narrow intellect, he calls on us to worship his poor idol as the type of female excellence. *This is true.*" This last sentence is beautiful, and points to a sudden and wholesome doubt in the reviewer's mind whether he might or might not be talking real nonsense after all. It is like the "This is a dog" with which the small boy underwrites his drawing, and quite as necessary. It was so dreadfully improper, in a novel, to suggest that a thoroughly good woman could be subject to feminine weaknesses—much more be loved for them! He was too new and too true not to be caviare to many, was Thackeray. And his great fault in the eyes of his detractors seems to have been this, that he did not make all his good women clever. Yet surely Ethel Newcome was good enough, if a thought wayward. And clever enough for anybody. Much too clever for that typical good chap, Lord Kew, as he knew and she knew, and he said. Ethel coming gravely to her grandmother with the ticket on her back, labelled for sale, is a living and eternal picture. For the girl knew what was wanted of her, and meant to see it through. Yet from the mighty chastening of her life—always the steady purpose of Thackeray's epics of Humanity, she came out pure gold. The scene in which, in dead and suffering silence, but unbroken calm, she hears from the old nurse the news of Clive New-

come's marriage, knowing that her own paltering with Vanity Fair (the text of all Thackeray's work, as the chosen title of his most famous story) has alone brought about that ill-omened nuptial, is wonderful, simply. And how characteristic of Thackeray's faith in God's even loving-kindness is the end. The death, ay and the rescue with it, of that poor, foolish, helpless little child of the terrible Campaigner. And the quiet second marriage, so delicately but so clearly suggested. She made a noble wife to world-proved Clive, our glorious Ethel Newcome. Ethel was tested through the furnace of worldly disappointment, and came out ennobled. Beatrix was tested in the same, and came out debased. Therein all the moral of Thackeray's watchful teaching. *Garde à ton âme.* Poor Mrs. Jameson!

It was not, however, only during his lifetime that Thackeray was to be told what a bad sort of boy he was. One of the popular reproaches cast at Thackeray by his literary pastors and masters was always his idleness. The ne'er-do-weel was always behindhand with his copy. There is a passage in one of Mr. Motley's letters which describes him at the Athenæum, writing the very number of one of his novels which is due in a few days' time. It was most irregular, and altogether wrong. "Unstead-fast, idle, changeable of purpose, no man ever failed more generally than he to put his best foot foremost." That was what Trollope wrote of him when he was gone!

"Dicite cælicolæ, squamosi dicite pisces!"

Thackeray's worst foot would seem not to have been

a bad one. But Trollope scolded his memory from the best of motives. He thought it would have been a disgraceful job if Thackeray, like himself, had got an appointment in the Post Office. He thought it very bad taste in Thackeray to stand for Parliament, and mentioned the exact cost of the election to prove it. On the whole, however, he held that Thackeray did not altogether disgrace himself by lecturing, and is pleased to think that the money he left behind him was "earned honestly, with the full approval of the world around him." Well: perhaps it was.

It is a pity that a novelist, himself of good repute in his own line, should take upon him thus to moralize upon the methods of a greater than he. According to him, Thackeray wanted "forethought," which he calls the novelist's "elbow-grease." Trollope wrote, regularly, so many words an hour, and therefore Thackeray should have done the same, and not so doing, wanted forethought. Forethought indeed! Had not the man the eyes to see, the heart to comprehend—that that very idleness—that very putting off of the allotted hour of work—was Thackeray's forethought itself? During those hours of naughty idleness, what stores of observation, what volumes of reflection, what mightiness of insight, were gathering in that massive brain, so strongly defiant of the pigmy's measuring-yard. "She stooped down. She kissed him on his monumental forehead. 'Call me Betsi,' she said." Thus Thackeray himself, in a delicious parody of Dumas, supposed to tell of Shakespeare and Queen Elizabeth, which appears in the volume called the "Orphan of Pimlico." There is

more behind those monumental foreheads than we wot of, I imagine. No, Mr. Trollope, no. There is more work, more thought, more truth, to spring out of one morning lost in Thackeray's idleness, than in many gallons of elbow-grease at so much industry per hour. "If Thackeray," said a writer in the *Pall Mall Gazette* when this appeared, "was idle while writing 'Vanity Fair' and 'The Newcomes,' if he was so little of a real business-like author that he could never go at his work so many hours a day, but wrote when the humour took him or when he was obliged, we assure Mr. Trollope that we do not much care,—any of us his countrymen. Indeed, if he could come back to write in his old idle way, on condition that any half-dozen well-regulated living authors we could name were sent to fill his place in Hades, we should be sorry to answer for the existence of the well-regulated six for a week." Idleness, with a Thackeray, is simply "getting ready." Not for a moment would I be thought to reflect on Trollope the novelist, with his quaint Miss-Austen-like touch of every-day life. But one man's methods are not as another's. And he—of all men—should have realized that, and — held his tongue. If all fiction should consist of machine-made works—the "mahogany-tables" with which Trollope himself compares his own—the world should not contain the novels that should be written. There are a good many of them, as it stands. If everybody published so many words a day!

Well, then, yes. The great life was a disappointment, to him who lived it, and as they whom the gods love, died young. Thackeray, Dickens, Byron, Shakespeare,

Shelley, Raphael, Musset, and so forth. Some day—we shall know. The great and abiding pain, of course, rose out of his own deep personal trial—trying tenfold to one of heart so deep—that to which in passing I have alluded as gently as may be, in other words than mine. No heavier trial can be laid on man. Was it because he was worth it? Faith, I think so.

"God has His mysteries of Grace,
His ways that we *cannot* tell:
He hides them deep, like the hidden sleep
Of him whom He loved so well."

One of my earliest personal memories of Thackeray, as early as anything that a good memory can recall, is of his words to a relation of mine of an older generation, who was counted amongst his friends. My relative had lost his wife—a dear and worthy one, if ever woman was. The husband was heart-broken, as well he might be. "Dear fellow," said Thackeray, "a dead sorrow is better than a living one." And God alone can tell or measure the tenderness with which my hero said it. For, as he is my subject, so is he my hero.

Religion, then, was to Thackeray the antidote, if Disappointment was the bane. Read him, and see it. Through all his trials and through all his troubles, there never lived a simpler or more rock-built faith. Did ever man write down his "Credo" in simpler words than these, or nobler?—

"How spake of old the Royal Seer?
(His text is one I love to treat on.)
This life of ours, he said, is sheer
Ματαιοτὴς Ματαιοτητῶν.
* * * *
Though thrice a thousand years are past,
Since David's son, the sad and splendid,
The weary King Ecclesiast,
Upon his awful tablets penned it."

'Splendid" and "penned it" make a shockingly bad rhyme, and oddly characteristic of Thackeray's—idleness. At so many words an hour, you could never rhyme like that. But, do the world's descriptions number one more graphic than that? "The sad and splendid, The *weary* King Ecclesiast." So was Thackeray weary. As wise—wise before all things—and as "splendid" as Solomon. And assuredly, every inch a King. And therein lies the story of his work and life. The man was a new Ecclesiast, and sad beyond belief accordingly.

It would be truer, perhaps, to speak of Thackeray's faith than of his religion, as he seems to have formed no very definite creed. At one time he seems to have tended towards the Roman Catholic, having steadily attended the sermons both of Manning and Newman; and his comparison between Charles Honeyman's study and the monk's cell points that way. But at another time we find him questioning the reality of the devotional feeling excited by beautiful music and choral services. This was after a visit to Magdalen Chapel at Oxford. In a letter to a friend, he severely depreciates the school of Thomas à Kempis, as taking all the love and use and brightness out of life. This seems to me

neither true nor worthy of him. It is well to remember Martha, but also to think of Mary.

"They also serve, who only stand and wait."

But Thackeray's deep reverence for the "awful Father," and hopeful trust that the tangle will somewhere be lovingly unwound, are characteristic of him always. The passage about the death of Helen Pendennis, before referred to, is but one of many noble professions of faith in his writings. And a further extract from the *North British* will fitly close this chapter, before we enter on the proper task of Biography. The passage itself strikes me as of rare merit.

"We cannot resist here," says the reviewer, "recalling one Sunday evening in December, when he was walking with two friends along the Dean road, to the west of Edinburgh—one of the noblest outlets to any city. It was a lovely evening, such a sunset as one never forgets; a rich dark bar of cloud hovered over the sun, going down behind the Highland hills, lying bathed in amethystine bloom; between this cloud and the hills there was a narrow slip of the pure æther, of a tender cowslip colour, lucid, and as if it were the very body of heaven in its clearness; every object standing out as if etched upon the sky. The north-west end of Corstorphine Hill, with its trees and rocks, lay in the heart of this pure radiance, and there a wooden crane, used in the quarry below, was so placed as to assume the figure of a cross: there it was, unmistakable, lifted up against the crystalline sky. All three gazed at it silently. As they gazed, he gave utterance in a tremulous, gentle, and rapid voice, to what all were feeling, in the word 'Calvary!' The friends walked on in silence, and then turned to other things. All that evening he was very gentle and serious, speaking, as he seldom did, of divine things,—of death, of sin, of eternity, of salvation; expressing his simple faith in God and in his Saviour."

CHAPTER II.

(By Herman Merivale.)

"IN 1336 there was a John de Thakwra who held of the Abbot of St. Mary of Fountains a dwelling-house and thirty acres of land at Hartwich. In 1361, William de Thackwra was tenant at will of a messuage and twenty-one acres at the same place. A century afterwards Robert Thackra was residing in the same vicinity, and kept the Grange of Brimham for the convent, where he was occasionally visited by Abbot Greenwell. Subsequently an Edward Thacquarye held houses and land from the same convent."

So run some family records which the kindness of the great writer's representatives has lent me to cull from: and there is something in these beginnings that one loves to read. A great man's works are his own best pedigree, but genealogies have for most of us a charm of their own. I like to trace the quaint mutations of spelling—the evolution of a Thackeray from a de Thakwra, wondering the while how de Thakwra was pronounced, and of what race he was derived. I like to know that Abbot Greenwell sometimes called on Robert Thackra, albeit I know not who Abbot Greenwell was. The card of the parish-parson is a certificate of good character and of polite worth, and I am sure that Thackra felt it.

"Ours," wrote one fair relative of the novelist to another, "was indeed a most remarkable family, and I feel proud of all our dear old relatives. They were so handsome and so good." One likes to hear of such frank and enthusiastic faith, just one of those gracious little weaknesses on which Thackeray himself would have loved to dwell. How pleasantly and wanderingly Mr. Roundabout would have egoized round such a text. For I deny the name of egotist to him or to Montaigne, in spite of his own argument.

"I should like to touch you sometimes with a reminiscence that shall waken your sympathy," he gossips about his two children in black, "and make you say: *Io anchè* have so thought, felt, smiled, suffered. Now how is this to be done except by egotism? *Linea recta brevissima*. That right line 'I' is the very shortest, simplest, straightforwardest means of communication between us, and stands for what it is worth and no more. Sometimes authors say, 'The present writer has often remarked;' or 'The undersigned has observed;' or 'Mr. Roundabout presents his compliments to the gentle reader, and begs to state,' &c.: but 'I' is better and straighter than all these grimaces of modesty; and although these are Roundabout Papers, and may wander who knows whither, I shall ask leave to maintain the upright simple perpendicular."

Perhaps this is unconscious pleading of the "present writer" on his own behalf. "On a most remarkable family" would have been a title to suit that roundabout humour to a turn. One might speculate much upon a certain Elena Fulford, of Ripon, who in 1453 bequeathed to Joan Thackwa "a coffer containing jewels, furfilling thread, crewels, and sewing thread;" and likewise a "folding cop-stool, a buffet-stool, and all my *sericum* (silk), with gold thread." A notable pair of

housewives, Elena Fulford and Joan Thackwa. And Joan Thackwa, we know, was very good and handsome. We cannot tell if Elena Fulford was.

Walter Thackeray, first of the name as now written, lived at Hampsthwaite, a little West Riding village by the Nidd, on the skirts of the forest of Knaresborough, like the other places mentioned; and he died in 1618. From father to son, from Walter to Thomas, they did their yeoman's duty in that home for nearly two hundred years, like so many other good old Saxon stock. They were of the race of small landowners so desiderated now, and tilled their own acres through generations of healthfulness, in their nerve-making moorland air. If records be true, they were a race of Anak—like their great descendant, more than common tall. Thomas Thackeray, last of the Hampsthwaite line, died childless in 1804, but seven years before the novelist was born. In 1682 meanwhile, we find a southward-bound Thackeray in Elias, of Christ's College, Cambridge—who passes M.A. in 1709, and two years later is Rector of Hawkerswell, in the Archdeaconry of Richmond. The traditions of his race were quite alive in him; for does not his epitaph (in good Latinity) tell us to this day that he shone, amongst other things, with "every virtue that can adorn a priest"?

"Gravity. Charity. Piety.
Piety, not languid, not delicate, not pontifical; but rigid,
but severe, but Christian.
A youth, he glowed with Virtue; a youth, he ensued Piety.
A youth, he even waxed old in Good Morals."

. . . . .

Does not the record irresistibly suggest the similar work of "Father Drono, who piqued himself upon his Latinity," upon the Ivanhoe stone of "Rebecca and Rowena"?

> "Verbera dura dabat: per Turcos multum equitabat:
> Guilbertum occidit: atque Hierosolyma vidit."

Well, the good Elias, desirous that his family should profit by the same classical advantages as he, appears to have imported a nephew from Yorkshire, in the shape of an earlier Thomas, and sent him as a King's scholar to Eton, in January, 1705–6. He was a noble-looking and pure-hearted boy when he went out of his village, the chronicler is quite sure, on inward evidence which who will grudge? And his parents, though grieved to lose him, knew that they had bestowed upon him principles which would be proof against all trials and temptations. They knew it; for they had given him their own. I repeat that one loves this pretty kind of song of praise: and I would not give a farthing for the man who does not swear by his forbears. Perhaps I will not go quite so far as my chronicler in holding that only the genius of his great descendant (for this was the ancestor direct) could conceive what thoughts arose in the boy's mind. I remember going to Harrow at about the same age; and conceive that they were much the same as mine. Most boys' are, at that familiar crisis. Neither Pain nor Pleasure, but a mixture of both. Curiosity, with a certain physical uneasiness, from what one has heard, perhaps felt, before. As a rule, no ambition about being

good, of any definite order. In due course, however, Thomas Thackeray became a Fellow of King's College, Cambridge; and when at thirty-five he was married to Ann Woodward, of twenty, they were then considered to be the handsomest pair that ever were seen. The mind reels a little; but we recover, and pass on. Beautiful as virtuous, the lady was fruitful as beautiful, and between September 2, 1730, and June 20, 1749, presented her lord with sixteen infants, yet without twins. The father was evidently rather oppressed at times. There is a ring of despair about the name of the tenth olive, Decima, born ten months after Jane; and one is not surprised to learn that, on the birth of the fourteenth, Dr. Thackeray accepted the best preferment he could get, and became head-master of Harrow. An interesting fact connected with this is that amongst his pupils was the famous scholar, Samuel Parr, who was destined, at home, for an apothecary. Struck by the boy's power and promise, Dr. Thackeray persuaded Parr the elder to send him to college. "Dr. Thackeray," wrote Parr long afterwards, "though a strict disciplinarian, possessed much kindness of temper and much suavity of manner. I have reason to love and revere him as a father as well as a master." For our purpose a more interesting fact is this; that the Benjamin of this goodly stem, who came into the world at Harrow as number sixteen, in June, 1749, was christened "William Makepeace." It is quaint to think of the first appearance—unwelcome probably, if not resented—of the little unconscious sponsor of the Titan afterwards to be.

Interesting, too, is the story of William Makepeace

the second, in his day (about 1795) a physician of renown at Chester. It was a singular coincidence that he should all his life have suffered from the effects of the blow of a friend at school, as the novelist did, though in a less degree. And there was no lack of prophetic humour in the man whose patient objected to paying him a guinea, and said he thought half would do. "Certainly," said the Doctor: then tore his prescription down the middle, and gave the patient half of that. But the quaint old-world flavour of ancestry must not keep me from my hero too long. The preparation of the way would seem to have culminated in another Elias Thackeray, born in 1771. He was a clergyman, of whom it is sad and strange to learn that his wife was plain. He "kept several curates, who always dined with him on Sundays." This must have been a dispensation in its way, too. But he himself—first a soldier and afterwards Vicar of Dundalk—was one of the finest men ever seen. Apart from his figure and complexion, he was "quite a saint" to one worshipper; while another, described as not so partial, said that he was known by the name of the "Beauty of Holiness." After that there was no more to be done. Nothing could come of it but Michael Angelo Titmarsh: and it was on July 18, 1811, at Calcutta, that the true and mighty Thackeray was born.

William Makepeace, the first, the Harrow Benjamin, was his grandfather. The curious name is by tradition connected with a martyred ancestor of Queen Mary's day: but it is not known. William was in the Bengal Civil Service, and in 1776, at Calcutta, married Amelia Richmond Webb. In the next year he left India with a

competence, and bought a house near Barnet. There he died at 64 years old. He and his wife had a family of twelve children; and of these the fourth child, and second son, was Richmond Thackeray, born in 1781. He was schooled at Eton, and was sent young to India, where his brother William, three years his elder, had gone before him. He was but a home-sick youngster, like many another exile; but he did his work. He was Judge and Magistrate at Ranghyr, and afterwards Secretary to the Calcutta Board of Revenue—described as a man of much personal frankness and charm. But he suffered much from illness, and died at thirty-one. His wife was Anne Becher, and what may be claimed for others, of her was true. I remember her as one of the handsomest old ladies in the world. The novelist was the only son of the two, and he adored his mother. After her first husband's death she married Major Carmichael Smyth, and, coming back to England, lived first at Addiscombe and afterwards in Devonshire. She and her son were afterwards much together in Paris, and she outlived him just one year, the lady with the great dark eyebrows, and the beautiful white hair. She went to her rest as suddenly as he, and was buried on Christmas Eve, 1864, the first anniversary of his death.

Well might portents like Glendower's have attended the birth-time of the great romancer. The English world has chosen, on the whole, six of the first rank, and no more: Fielding, Walter Scott, Jane Austen, George Eliot, Dickens, and Thackeray. Any one for himself may be indifferent to one or more of these. But that is the net result, till now. And of those, without questions

of comparison, the world pitted the last two, one against the other, as the literary duellists of the age. Thackeray was born in 1811. In 1812 came Dickens. And just before those two, in the same cycle, in 1809 and three or four years earlier, were born the appointed political duellists of that same age, Gladstone and Disraeli. So short were those two literary careers, compared to the two political, that one almost regards the novelists as of an elder generation, rather than as the younger men. But it is certain that that narrow space of years gave birth, in its course, to the four foremost Englishmen of our time.

Born, then, at Calcutta on the 18th of July, 1811, the child Thackeray was sent to England upon his father's death five years afterwards. His ship touched at St. Helena, and he was taken by his black servant to Bowood to see the Corsican ogre—only to meet him again on the occasion of that Second Funeral upon which I drew in the last chapter. It is easy to see how the early memory is made to point his moral. England was in mourning for Princess Charlotte when he came; and there too the unconscious associations of childish memory and observation seem to leave their traces on his Georgian lectures, through their deep tone of sad and thoughtful moralizing upon the vicissitudes of power, and the impartialities of fate. Insatiable and steady goddess—*Pallida Mors!*

> "Le pauvre en sa cabane où le chaume le couvre,
> Est sujet à ses lois;
> Et la garde qui veille aux barrières du Louvre,
> N'en defend pas nos rois."

His grandfather having been four years dead, Thackeray was taken charge of at Chiswick by his aunt, Mrs. Ritchie, who was alarmed one day on finding that his uncle's hat fitted him, and carried him off to Sir Charles Clark. "Don't be afraid," the popular physician is reported to have said, "he has a large head; but there's a good deal in it." The little man, however, began his life much like other little men, and seems to have been innocent of the bottomless sin of precocity. Here is his first recorded letter, written February 12, 1818, to his mother in India, "in a round hand and between ruled lines," my chronicler says, and "evidently unassisted in its diction":

"My dear Mama,—I hope you are quite well. I have given my dear Grandmama a kiss. My Aunt Ritchie is very good to me. I like Chiswick, there are so many good Boys to play with. St. James's Park is a very fine place. St. Paul's Church too I like very much. It is a finer place than I expected. I hope Captain Smyth is well; give my love to him and tell him he must bring you home to your affectionate little son,

"WILLIAM THACKERAY."

The dear little delicious boy-like humbug! the touch of the "so many good Boys to play with" is the truest of humanity in little, original edition!

"That is the way we all begin!"

And, with all respect to the chronicler, "My Aunt Ritchie is very good to me" is decidedly suggestive of "assisted diction," and the near presence of that excellent lady in the background. "I love my dear school-

mistress," I remember writing through burning tears with the fiery authority at my elbow, just after she had boxed my ears severely for not dotting my i's in a Greek exercise. Earnestly I had tried to explain that the Greeks didn't; but the plea was too idle. If they were so ignorant, it was no excuse for me. This very first letter of Thackeray's was prophetic of his self-illustrating taste, being decorated with a small drawing of an officer on horseback, the horse very weak of leg, but the rider all that he ought to be. It was supposed to be a portrait of Major Carmichael Smyth, to whom his mother was by this time engaged. And here let me quote my chronicler textually, as making me suspicious of the diction:

"There is a little PS. (to this letter) by his uncle, who says, 'My dear Sister Anne, I have seen my dear little nephew, and am delighted with him.' And a longer one from his great-grandmother Becher, to whom he had just given the kiss. She was a very precise old lady, and always called her daughter Harriet who lived with her 'Miss Becher,' and was addressed by her as 'Ma'am.' She says in her postscript, 'William got so tired of his pen he could not write longer with it, so he hopes you will be able to read his pencil. The little one lives half the day with us, and calls—"Grandmama and Aunt Becher win you give me a penny win you?" He drew me your house in Calcutta, not omitting his monkey looking out of the window, and Black Betty at the top drying her towels, and told us of the numbers you collected on his birthday in that large room he pointed out to us.'"

For six years (from 1822 to 1828) the boy Thackeray was at Charterhouse School. He hated it. They were but rough training-grounds for sensitive and nervous children, the public schools of those

days. But, somehow, they bred manhood, and I sometimes wonder if a more grandmotherly rule is not weakening the fibre of the race, believing as I must believe, from many and various signs, that the Decline and Fall is upon us. Not long since a schoolmaster of my acquaintance, comparing his own boy-days and mine with these, told me how he had lately given some theatricals in his school, even as he had himself acted as a boy. At that earlier date, he said, he well remembered how awkward and wretched the boys felt who had to act the women's parts, and how eagerly they cast off the war-paint when the play was over. "But my schoolboys now," he said, "rouged and painted and discussed their furbelows like the real thing—cared all for their dresses and nothing for their acting—and cared more for appearing in their fal-lals at supper afterwards, than anything in the whole show." In after years, Thackeray came back to the old school as we all do, with an affection that takes no count of the bad times, and thinks only of the good. But, poor little man, what a true cry of boy-pathos rings out of this letter to his mother in his last year at the school :

"I really think I am becoming terribly industrious, though I can't get Dr. Russell to think so. It is so hard when you endeavour to work hard, to find your attempts nipped in the bud. . . . There are but 370 in the school. *I wish there were only* 369."

No more genuine expression of the intense sense of injustice which a schoolboy feels so strongly when he tries so hard to do his best, and goes thankless away

for it from his pastors and masters, was ever set down than that "It *is* so hard." How many boys, just waking up to work, has not a schoolmaster's injustice and imperception disgusted into idleness again! And indeed it is easy, out of the man Thackeray, to construct the idea of the Boy. A moony little fellow, sensitive and solitary, and foredoomed by the official wiseacredom as a dreamer; likeable and loveable, but not popular; ever and again waking up to some fit of energy in the schoolroom or on the playground, and regarded askance for it as one of those idle apprentices who "could do anything if they chose"—no wonder he should have felt so keenly when his honest attempts to work hard were "nipped in the bud" by Mr. Schoolmaster. Perhaps, however, this very discouragement was the forerunner of "Vanity Fair" and "Esmond." Dr. Russell's views of industry and idleness seem to have borne some affinity to Trollope's.

Major Carmichael Smyth, now Thackeray's stepfather, was settled in England with his wife as Governor of Addiscombe, while the boy was at Charterhouse. He wrote regularly to his mother, it seems, in daily letters kept together journal-wise. As early as Jan. 20, 1822, he asks to be told all about Addiscombe and the "Gentlemen Cadets," and "if Papa has got a cock-hat that will fit him." "I have made a vow not to spend that five-shilling piece you gave me until I get into the 8th form. Write again as quick as you can." And towards the close of his school-time, in the letter which bewailed his wasted efforts, he described how he was reading the Georgics, and went on—

"I have not read any novel this term except one by the Author of 'Granby,' not so good as 'Granby.' I have read a curious book on the Inquisition, with plates delineating faithfully the various methods of torture! . . . We are going to have a debate to-morrow night on 'The Expediency of a Standing Army.' We have not yet settled the sides which we shall take in this important question. There goes the big bell, and I must have done for the present, but we will have a little more chat, before night, as I hope to send this off this evening. Good-bye till school is all over for the day.—I have just heard of a poor lad who has got a commission in his father's regiment, and was expecting his arrival from India every day. His father and mother went up the country previous to their departure, were seized with cholera and both died on the same day! When I come home I mean to get up at five o'clock every morning, and so get four hours' reading before breakfast; then there will be only two short hours more, and the day will be my own! I feel every day as if one link more were taken from my chain. I have a consolation in thinking there are not many links more. I have been working all the evening, and must be up by seven to work again. So good-night, dearest mother."

How much of Thackeray one seems to see in this, with the man's life and record before us. There is true Thackeravian fun in the *we have not yet settled which sides we shall take*, which is prophetic of some later politicians of more serious cast. And how odd it is to read of a young debate on Standing Armies, sixty years ago, to us that groan under a Bismarck's Armamental Age. The *little more chat* on paper foreshadows all those sheets of chatty "copy" which were one day to entrance the world; and the touch about the poor lad's trouble rings the true note beforehand of the ever-ready sympathy with sorrow and with trial that was to inspire that gentle life. Last, not least, is the whole volume about his own character, conveyed in the delightful

announcement that he means to *get up at five o'clock every morning, and so get four hours' reading before breakfast.* Bless the boy's dear heart, how many mornings did he do that? This great resolve represents exactly what this Idle Apprentice of Letters was always meaning to do, and—mercifully, never did. It represents pretty nearly, I believe ("writing" set down for "reading"), what the Good Boy Trollope actually did. The moral thereof would seem to be that no two literary men ever work in quite the same way, and that for any one of the brotherhood to teach another the art of egg-sucking in pen and ink, is about the most gratuitous waste of wit and wisdom ever undertaken by man.

"I first remember Thackeray as a pretty, gentle boy at the Charterhouse," his friend George Venables wrote of him. "Though he staid there several years he never rose high in the school, nor did he distinguish himself in the playground; but he was liked by those who knew him, and in the latter part of his time he began to display the faculty of writing humorous verse. His little poems and parodies were much admired by his contemporaries; but he was less known than many boys of less promise because he became latterly a day scholar, living at a boarding-house in Charterhouse Square, and only appeared among us in school-time."

It is not exactly clear at what period of his school life the boy took up his quarters at a boarding-house; but in the unwritten tables of precedence which existed at public schools in those days, the day-scholars, or home-boarders as they were elsewhere called, were regarded as somewhat inferior members of the youthful hierarchy. No doubt this may have increased

Thackeray's habit of seclusion. It was in a school-fight with this same schoolfellow Venables that Thackeray received the injury to his nose which left its effects through life. There is no doubt that but for that he would have been as handsome a man as any of his well-favoured forbears. With me, personally, he leaves that memory as it is. I always think of him as a man of exceeding comeliness. He was very indifferent to banter on the subject, and nobody ever caricatured him as well as he was always caricaturing himself. Who does not love the little squat figure with the spectacles whom Titmarsh loved to draw in all sorts of impossible positions? He gave me once a copy of his "Rose and the Ring," with a delicious frontispiece of himself in the act of presenting it. A relation borrowed it, and I never heard of it again. It amused the great man to tell anecdotes against himself—to repeat Douglas Jerrold's joke when he had just stood godfather to some friend's boy—"Lord, Thackeray, I hope you didn't present the child with your own mug,"—or tell his own story of the travelling showman who was sitting disconsolate by the roadside, because he had just lost his giant. "It wasn't so much the money he brought in," he said, "it was that he was such a good fellow, and everything to me. We were just like brothers, we was." Sympathetically Thackeray, whose great stature was another favourite joking-matter with him, asked if he might not do for the place. Critically and seriously the showman examined him. "Well," he said, "you're nigh tall enough, but I'm afraid you're too hugly." So on

another occasion, when he went to a fair with his friend and brother-giant Higgins, best known by his pen-name of Jacob Omnium, he said laughingly at the receipt of custom, "They'll let us in free. They think we're in the business."

But we are forgetting Charterhouse. Of Thackeray's other school-friendships, the one which most survived was with John Leech the draughtsman, afterwards to be his fellow-worker in the pages of Mr. *Punch*. It may not be out of place here to record a delightful dinner which I remember at Thackeray's table, which he gave in order to bring together Leech and Sothern the comedian, the creator—in more than the usual conventional sense—of that immortal ass Dundreary. Of Thackeray's love of plays and acting I shall have to speak again. But the conjunction of these three very differing stars was interesting, because of Sothern's eager acknowledgment to Leech (his Dundreary had but just burst on the town) that the idea and success of the character were due entirely to a close and constant study of the artist's "swells" in *Punch*. Tom Taylor —the author of the play and another *Punch*-man—had not proposed to make of Dundreary anything but a subordinate part—that of an ordinary stage-booby. Sothern saw its capacities on Leech's lines, and with official sanction made of it what became, perhaps, the most finished and irresistible comic portrait of the day. The host took the keenest delight in the historical incident, as he called it, of this first meeting of Dundreary's parents. As for such a witness as myself, I think that of the three, at that age, I regarded Sothern with the greatest awe.

When all the links were taken from his chain, Thackeray left Charterhouse in May, 1828. How he enshrined the place afterwards in "The Newcomes" the world well knows. Many an after-visit may have refreshed his memory; but none the less the power of observation must have been early at work, in the boy who "couldn't get Dr. Russell to think" that there was good to be got out of him, but could afterwards make his "Grey Friars" famous in such a description as this:

"Under the great archway of the hospital you look at the quaint old square with its blackened trees and garden, surrounded by ancient houses of the build of the last century, now slumbering like pensioners in the sunshine—the old men creeping along in their black gowns under the ancient arches, whose struggle of life is over, whose hope and noise and bustle have sunk into that grey calm. There is an old Hall, a beautiful specimen of the architecture of James's time: an old Hall? many old Halls; old staircases, old passages, old chambers decorated with old portraits, walking in the midst of which, we walk as it were in the early seventeenth century. In their Chapel, where assemble the boys of the school, and the fourscore old men of the Hospital, the Founder's tomb stands. There he lies, *Fundator Noster*, in his ruff and gown, awaiting the great Examination Day. A plenty of candles lights up this chapel, and this scene of age and youth and early memories. How solemn the well-remembered prayers are! How beautiful and decorous the rite; how noble the ancient words of the supplication which the priest utters, and to which generations of fresh children and troops of bygone seniors have cried Amen!"

Has not this passage a moral of its own? Thackeray made himself no name in classic scholarship, probably because of Dr. Russell's dull discouragement. But being no fool, he read and he loved his Greek and Latin, and became, amongst other things, an intimate

Horatian. To me, the impress of a classic training is upon every line of his work, in its force of idiom, its scholarliness of thought, its simplicity of expression. Only a classic training breeds such an English scholar; and the decried value of Greek and Latin finds a conspicuous champion in a man who was neither dunce nor professor, plucker nor plucked—and neither of these is a fair test—but one who took things as he found them, and made average use of his opportunities. Men talk of "Greek and Latin" like a hard-and-fast quantity. Why, it means everything. Philosophy through a Plato; History through Thucydides; Tragedy through Æschylus; Comedy through Aristophanes; Poetry through Homer;—what you will! Greek and Latin are the conduit-pipe of all true study, and without them, Scholarship is not. Science can never take the place of Letters, and is unwise to try. For Letters are the art of Expression, and of all things Science needs Expression most.

CHAPTER III.

(By Herman Merivale.)

IF Thackeray's term-times—or halves, as boys more love to call them—at the Charterhouse were afterwards productive of "Grey Friars" and dear old Colonel Newcome, the cherished holiday-times of the same period were to lay in that young mind the foundations of "Pendennis." From 1825 to 1831—which suggests the date of his becoming a day-boarder, just half-way through his school career—his parents rented from Sir John Kennaway a good-sized house in Devonshire called Larkbeare, about a mile and a half from Ottery St. Mary. Among the residents in the neighbourhood was the present Lord Coleridge, then quite young; and at home, as at school, Thackeray's quiet personality does not seem to have been one of those which leaves tales to tell behind it. Writing to my chronicler, Lord Coleridge says:—"I am sorry to be unable to give you any further help in your most interesting work. Thackeray is a national possession; and anything I could do to make a notice of him more complete and authentic I willingly would. But his residence here was when I was a mere child, and I have never myself heard or known any traditions of it."

The vicar of the parish, however, Dr. Cornish, used to lend Thackeray books from his library, one being a copy of Cary's "Birds of Aristophanes," which was returned to him illustrated with three humorous water-colour drawings, which Lord Coleridge remembers to have seen in pen and pencil. Coming events may have cast their halo upon those illustrations, and no doubt the good vicar lived to delight in the book so favoured; but I cannot as a book-lover forbear to speculate upon what his feelings must have been at the time.

"Audax omnia perpeti
Gens pupillaris ruit per vetitum et nefas."

But such are the fashions of the whirligig of Time. If perchance the Charterhouse bookseller who sold that boy his Ainsworth's Latin Dictionary for a shilling sterling, had but known that it was one day to fetch £4 15s.!

When Thackeray died, Dr. Cornish was one of the many who added their quota to the store of story. "I remember," he says, "to have read some account of his early days, as given by himself, in which, among other things, he speaks of his having a strong desire to become an artist, but he added that he was discouraged from the pursuit. These little sketches which are now before me show at least how completely he caught the spirit of the author he was illustrating; and it may well be questioned whether, if he had cultivated his genius in that direction, he might not have won as great distinction in art as he did in literature." I own, myself, to holding that there can be no question about

it, if for artist we say caricaturist. Of his favourite varieties of self-portraiture I have spoken, and his illustrations of his own works are a perfect gallery of humour. Among the published ones, perhaps those in "The Rose and the Ring," in which he combines so inimitably the three arts of comedy, of drawing, and of verse-writing, are about the most effective, as probably they sinned against the light by being about the most careless. Valoroso at the family breakfast, with his twelve eggs—I have been impelled to count them over and over again, and cannot be mistaken—Baby Betsinda performing her little *pas seul* before him in the garden—and the presentment of her face when she grew up to pretty-girlhood, leave no room for surprise that the man's versatile power was tempted in that direction. No wonder that he could not see at once that he was called to the greater way. In *Punch*, where he was prose-writer, poet, and draughtsman, it is not only in his illustrations to his own work, but in many of the separate drawings which he contributed in the days of Leech and Doyle, that this gift of his stands out confessed. The "Miseries of an Author" series, for instance, are as effective and as speaking, without the aid of text, as those of any of his cotemporaries.

But we are still at Ottery St. Mary, though the good vicar's discourse on the "Marginalia" tempted us ahead. I am again indebted to my chronicler for the following extract from a book of Dr. Cornish's, called "Short Notes on the Church and Parish of Ottery St. Mary, Devon," in which there is one note headed "Clavering St. Mary and Pendennis." Thus it runs :—

"No person of these parts can read 'Pendennis' without being struck with the impression which the scenery of this neighbourhood must have made upon his mind, to be reproduced in that remarkable story after a lapse of more than twenty years. The local descriptions clearly identify Clavering St. Mary, Chatteris, and Baymouth, with Ottery St. Mary, Exeter, and Sidmouth; and in the first edition, which is ornamented with vignettes in the margin, an unmistakable representation of the 'cock-tower' of Ottery St. Mary is introduced. But though Clavering St. Mary and Chatteris are locally identified with Ottery and Exeter, the characteristics of the story found no counterpart in the inhabitants of either locality.

"In *Fraser's Magazine* for November, 1854, there is an article entitled 'Clavering St. Mary, and a Talk about Devonshire Worthies,' which confirms this identity, where it speaks of the birthplace of Pendennis, 'that little old town of Clavering St. Mary, past which the rapid River Brawl holds on its shining course, and which boasts a fine old church with great grey towers, of which the sun illuminates the delicate carving, deepening the shadows of the great buttresses, and gilding the glittering windows and flaming vane.' Things have, however, changed at Clavering since Mr. Thackeray spent many a summer holiday there in his boyhood. The old Collegiate Church has been swept and garnished, and bedizened until it scarcely knows itself. Wapshot boys no longer make a cheerful noise, shuffling with their feet as they march into church and up the organ-loft stairs, but walk demurely to their open seats in the aisle."

At this point I come upon a lovely touch of that little half-conscious spirit of autobiography which lights so many of the greater novels of the world. Who does not remember how the calf-love of the boy Pendennis came out in flaming verse ("with which he was perfectly satisfied") in the *County Chronicle and Chatteris Champion*, what time he was (all unconscious) about to be jilted by the beautiful Fotheringay, and inspired the Poet's Corner of that established journal?

"'Papa,' said Miss Milly, 'ye wouldn't be for not sending the poor boy his letters back? Them letters and pomes is mine. They were very long, and full of all sorts of nonsense, and Latin, and things I couldn't understand the half of: indeed I've not read 'em all; but we'll send 'em back to him when the proper time comes.' And going to a drawer, Miss Fotheringay took out . . . (from the *Chronicle*) the verses celebrating her appearance in the character of Imogen, and putting by the leaf upon which the poem appeared (for, like ladies of her profession, she kept the favourable printed notices of her performances), she wrapped up Pen's letters, poems, passions, fancies, and tied them with a piece of string neatly, as she would a parcel of sugar."

And thus deliciously inspired by the amazing and elderly burlesque Cupid who figures as the initial letter of Chapter Twelve of the famous story, with the well-known Thackeray sign-manual of the Crossed Spectacles, Mr. Arthur Pendennis entered at a blushing age upon that career of letters which he was afterwards to make newly illustrious. Even at the same age, at the same place, and in the same way, did Mr. Michael Angelo Titmarsh enter upon the same misguided calling. Not for the same cause, perhaps. At all events, history and Dr. Cornish are silent. But Thackeray was very fond of

the stage. Years—many years—afterwards, I remember his asking a friend at the old Garrick, when I was dining with the great man to be "taken to the play"—always a delight to him when he could catch his boy: "Don't you like the play, So-and-So?" "Well—yes—I like a *good* play." "Oh, go along!" said Thackeray—"you don't understand what I *mean!*" So is it that I cannot believe that the Fotheringay episode had not its root in an experience of his own. What in the world, to a stage-stricken boy, resembles, or ever will resemble, the wild infatuation for his goddess of another world, the "Dea certe" who lives another life and speaks another language, and in the robe of Ophelia or Imogen has no resemblance to the common round? If he may only see her across the footlights, and sometimes watch her on her homeward way, it is Romance. But—if he can but manage to "know her off," as poor Pen did his Emily, it is Poetry! So, when Pen began to write "Lines to Miss Fotheringay, of the Theatre Royal—of the most gloomy, thrilling, and passionate cast," he signed himself no longer *Nep*, but *Eros*. And the "adorable simplicity" of the divinity who relaxed from Poetry only to "make a Poy," shone all the brighter through its self-denying contrast in the youthful poet's mind. The story is too vivid to be all fancy. Notwithstanding those quiet ways of his, and the absence of legend about him, I entertain a secret belief that somewhere or other, in the narrow precincts of the little Exeter theatre of the day, young Thackeray wooed, loved, and lost, an Emily Fotheringay. But, unlike Dr. Portman, I do not believe that Dr. Cornish ever knew anything about it.

I dream, however, as dream one must when one tries to construct for oneself, out of the many fragments, so complicated yet so human a mortal as was this. It was, however, at this period of existence, it seems likely, that Thackeray did make that momentous "first appearance in print" which may mean so much, when it doesn't happen to be the last too. And it was in the county papers, and it was in verse. Not love-verse, unluckily for my theory: for it was "a parody of an intended speech of Lalor Sheil's upon Penenden Heath, which he was not allowed to deliver" (Dr. Cornish again), "but of which, before he left town to attend the meeting in question, he had taken the precaution to send copies to some of the leading journals for insertion. This little *jeu d'esprit* Thackeray allowed me to send to the *Western Luminary;* and I question whether this was not the first appearance in print of an author who was destined by-and-by to occupy so distinguished a place among the most classical English writers of the present day." The verses were these:

"IRISH MELODY.

(*Air*, '*The Minstrel Boy.*')

"Mister Sheil into Kent has gone,
On Penenden Heath you'll find him;
Nor think you that he came alone,
There's Doctor Doyle behind him.

'Men of Kent,' said the little man,
'If you hate Emancipation,
You're a set of fools.' He then began
A cut and dry oration.

He strove to speak, but the men of Kent
Began a grievous shouting,
When out of his waggon the little man went,
And put a stop to his spouting.

'What though these heretics heard me not,'
Quoth he to his friend Canonical,
'My speech is safe in the *Times*, I wot,
And eke in the *Morning Chronicle*.'"

Not very much in these to give any great promise, perhaps; but suggestive even then of the simplicity of expression and facility of rhyme always characteristic of this branch of Thackeray's work. They shadow, too, beforehand his love of playing round Irish subjects, with a fun that had no vice to it, but recognized a spirit of fun like his own. One vaguely wonders what he would make of his favourite subject-matter to-day. Surely a certain article of dress—till now supposed to be unmentionable, but now a party emblem—would have inspired some κτημα ἐς ἀει in the form of a Celtic ode. But it would have been matter for nothing but serious reprobation. Jokes are now licensed upon those premises no more.

Dr. Cornish was himself a scholar and a poet, as we read, and an intimate friend of Keble. Such a mind can have had on Thackeray's no influence but for good, and he saw in his young friend, it may be suspected, something that Dr. Russell could not see. But the links of the Charterhouse chain were at last unwound, and Pendennis again shall speak for the impression of Ottery St. Mary upon the mind of the boy whose holidays there

must to him have been a delightful contrast to the uncongenial life of the school.

"Looking at the little old town from the London Road, as it runs by the lodge at Fairoaks, and seeing the rapid and shiny Brawl" (the "Otter") "winding down from the town, and skirting the woods of Clavering Park, and the ancient church tower and peaked roofs of the houses rising up among trees and old walls, behind which swells a fair background of sunshiny hills that stretch from Clavering westward towards the sea, the place looks so cheery and comfortable that many a traveller's heart must have yearned toward it from the coach-top, and he must have thought that it was in such a calm friendly nook he would like to shelter at the end of life's struggle."

CHAPTER IV.

(By Herman Merivale.)

"MORE by token," wrote the late Master of Trinity, Dr. Thompson, some years later, "that it was in that place" (the "studious cloister pale" which forms the court of the famous Cambridge college) "that I was first made aware of the name of a tall, thin, large-eyed, full and ruddy-faced man with an eye-glass fixed *en permanence*—the glass he has immortalized, or ought to have done so, for, on consideration, he supplied its place in his portrait of Titmarsh with a *pair*. I did not know him personally until his second year, when a small literary society was made up of him, John, now Archdeacon, Allen, Henry, afterwards Dean, Alford, Robert, now Archdeacon, Groome, and Young of Caius, with another of whom I am not sure, and myself. We were seven. I don't know that we ever agreed on a name. Alford proposed the 'Covey,' because we 'made such a noise when we got up'—to speak, that is; but it was left for further consideration. I think Thackeray's subject was 'Duelling,' on which there was then much diversity of opinion. We did not see in him even the germ of those literary powers which, under the stern influence of necessity, he afterwards developed. One does not see

the wings in a chrysalis. He led a somewhat lazy (?) but pleasant and 'gentlemanlike' life in a set mixed of old schoolfellows and such men as the two archdeacons named above; with them and with my friend Edward Fitzgerald he no doubt had much literary talk, but not on 'University Subjects.' He sat, I remember, opposite to me at the 'May Examination'; he was put in the fourth class" (for himself, Thackeray had hoped no better than a fifth). "It was a class where clever 'non-reading men' were put, as in a limbo. But though careless of University distinction, he had a vivid appreciation of English poetry, and chanted the praises of the old English novelists, especially his model, Fielding. He had always a flow of humour and pleasantry, and was made much of by his friends. At supper-parties, though not talkative—rather observant—he enjoyed the humours of the hour, and sang one or two old songs with great applause. 'Old King Cole' I well remember to have heard from him at the supper I gave to celebrate my election as scholar. It made me laugh excessively, not from the novelty of the song, but from the humour with which it was given. Thackeray, as you know, left us at the end of his second year, and for some time I saw him no more. Our debating club fell to pieces when he went."

Such is the description of Thackeray, the undergraduate, in the days of Pendennis's Oxbridge life. Written by a man who was himself one of the keenest observers, as he was one of the most polished scholars and most humorous companions of his day, it is a picture worth study and remembrance—part, certainly,

of a very consistent whole as we follow the novelist's career. Thompson must, I think, have been very congenial to him. He himself was quite in the Thackeravian vein. He was discoursing one day to me at Kissingen, many years later, in his dry fashion upon the superior courtesy of the polished foreigner to anything his insularity could arrive at. "You saw," he said, "how affably that gentleman acknowledged me." He was himself most domestically, if not even seedily, dressed, and we had just been crossed by a gorgeous Russian in furs and jewels of price, who made a condescending bow. "It was affable," I answered; "even princely. Who is he?" "That," he said, "is my courier."

A very different man was Dr. Thompson's predecessor, Whewell, in the famous office of which he said that there were many bishops, but only one Master of Trinity. He was Thackeray's tutor, before he reached the Mastership, on the young Carthusian's arrival in Cambridge in February, 1829. It is not certain whether the boy read with a private tutor in the interval between leaving Charterhouse in May, 1828, and the date of his matriculation. There was something of the kind suggested; but it has been said that his stepfather himself undertook the necessary work of preparation. However this may have been, our chronicler is quite right in regretting as a great mistake that Thackeray went up to Cambridge in February, for the Lent term, instead of entering for the Michaelmas term in October. At Oxford the choice of month makes little difference, though there too October is that of the majority. But I began my own Oxford life in January,

and am aware of no difference it made. At the sister university the Michaelmas has always been the freshman's term, with very rare exceptions; and, thanks to the consequent arrangement of lectures and studies, the Lenten freshman may be at a great disadvantage amongst his fellows. This was the case with Thackeray, and may go far to account for his university life having been uncompleted. But the boy—now by the mystic rite of matriculation a "man," of the class of men most jealous of the title, even while qualified as "fresh"—was well content to enter on his independence without reflexions of that kind. As in dealing with his school-life, so at the university, I can follow no better authority than that of the family chronicler, and let the story tell itself as much as may be in Thackeray's own words, as he kept up the habit of journalizing to his mother.

"I am now about to begin my first journal, my dearest mother," he writes under date "Saturday, 28 February, 1829," "which I hope will be always sent with the regularity which it is my full purpose to give to it. After father left me, I went in rather low spirits to S—— of Corpus, and with him strayed about among the groves,* or rather fields, which skirt the Colleges of King's, Trinity, &c."

Then, after the delight of seeing a boat-race, he eats "a vast dinner in state in the Hall," and going to chapel with his new surplice and new cap, he is inducted, early indeed, and without respect of place, into the freshman's first mystery. The new cap disappears, and "a wretched old thing" is left in its place. To the undergraduate's "trencher-board," as to the umbrella of maturer life, no right of property has ever

been known to attach. A certain acute American's receipt for getting a new umbrella was to wait in a porch in the rain till you see an umbrella pass that you would like, then go straight up to the possessor and claim it as yours. "Sir, he will give it you at once. For *how is he to know it isn't?*" Thackeray's cap having gone the way of all flesh, in all the flush of his early pride in it, he consoles himself by having two friends to tea, who "are just gone, and have left me to write these few lines to my dearest mother, to remind her of her affectionate son, W. M. T." On Sunday, the 1st of March, he goes to chapel morning and evening, and to St. Mary's (the University Church both of Cambridge and Oxford), and "in the evening to drink tea at old Mrs. Thackeray's" (then ninety-one years of age), "where I saw the Vice-Provost of King's, who invited me to come and see him often and soon. The old lady said she loved the name of Thackeray." On Monday he makes the acquaintance of Mr. Fawcett, his private tutor (a lesser star than the tutor proper, and popularly called a coach), and I grieve to say sketches him in pen and ink on the margin of his journal as one

> "who looks a decidedly reading character. I am to go to him every evening, and read Classics and Mathematics alternately. I read Algebra with him this evening, and like his method much. To-morrow I hope to be elected at the Union. I have some thoughts of writing, for a college prize, an English Essay on 'The influence of the Homeric Poems on the Religion, the Politics, the Literature and Society of Greece,' but it will require much reading, which I fear I have not time to bestow on it."

How characteristic is the glimpse we get again of the

Thackeray of magnificent intentions, with the frank freshman's admission that he "may not have the time to bestow" upon the modest subject-matter of that portentous essay, which is certainly not to be found in any collected edition of his works. Who can have got that prize? Undergraduate Gladstone must then have been at Oxford, and in his beloved line of study must here have been spared a formidable competitor. On Tuesday the young *alumnus* has a ten-mile "grind," as the walk after a capacious college meal is known to men; is elected a member of the Union, "where was a debate on the Catholic question"; and finishes with three friends to tea. On Wednesday, Mr. George Thackeray, a fellow of King's, calls upon him, and he goes to call on the Vice-Provost of King's, "whom I much like." Then

"to a wine-party at Carne's, but was obligated to go away for an hour and a half to my tutor; by this I was saved about seven glasses of wine. I find that sleeping from twelve until seven o'clock is quite enough for me. When it is lighter I shall go to my tutor from six to seven in the morning, and not at six in the evening, as I do now. . . . Good-night, dear mother. I have obeyed your injunctions and sent you a drawing of my rooms; next them is the tower where Newton 'kept.'"

On the margin of this letter the rooms are sketched in water-colour, with a ground-plan showing the position of the table and book-case, and Dr. Thompson identified them thus: "They are in the Great Court, opposite the Master's lodge, ground floor, adjoining on the left the Great Gate, just under Newton's rooms. Letter E, right hand, Ground-floor, is the official description."

Thackeray furbished and furnished and painted, and thought his rooms "have as great convenience and comforts as any rooms in college." Taste and finish were sure to be characteristic of a man of such unvarying neatness, and such capacity for pains in all he carried through. His very handwriting was, in the later days, a fine art with him as much as his drawing, and he loved to elaborate it with quaint scrolls and borders and arabesques, especially after he had furnished himself with the favourite "gold pen" which he made the theme of one of the most graceful of his excursions into verse.

This record of Thackeray's first few college days gives promise of a pleasantly full life for an undergraduate then well furnished with the sinews of war, and with a mind bound to suck scholarship out of everything, even if through channels less vulgar and tremendous than the influence of Homer upon Greek Politics, Literature, and Society. And even at eighteen years old he was at once initiated into the early mysteries of undergraduate profit and loss; for if he sacrificed a cap, did he not save seven glasses of wine, at some five glasses to the hour? How we might be tempted to moralize upon these flying glimpses into the opening scenes and floating schemes of youth, where that great intellect was feeling its way to Day, unmarked of any in its promise of power!

I borrow from my chronicle a few more extracts at second hand, written very closely in a very small hand, and often crossed, it tells me, that the week's story might be contained in a sheet. For did not postage in those days, from Cambridge to Larkbeare, cost elevenpence?

"*April* 29.—I had six to dinner one day. Soup, smelts, soles, boiled turkey, saddle of mutton, wild ducks, creams, jellies, &c., composed it. The 'Sauterne' is much admired. This morning from half-past seven till one at Classics. We are going to establish an Essay Club. There are as yet but four of us, Browne, Moody, Young, and myself, all Carthusians. We want no more Charterhouse men; if we get ten we shall scarcely have to write three essays a year, so that it will take up but little of our time. I am always up now by seven, but I find it very expensive, seeing that my brown loaf diminishes with much greater rapidity than it was wont when I kept later hours."

"Breakfasted at Young's this morning to meet the essay men. I went to a wine-party at my tutor's the other day; such fun! If you can fancy Dominie Sampson giving a wine-party. He and I get on very well; he is very well-meaning, and patient to a miracle, just the thing for a beginner. I am just beginning to find out the beauties of the Greek Play; I pursue a plan of reading only the Greek without uttering a word of English, and thus having the language in itself, which I find adds to my pleasure in a very extraordinary manner, and will if I pursue it lead me, I hope, to think in Greek, and of course will give me more fluency."

"*April* 16.—To-day has been an idle day with me rather. But a little idleness doth one good. This day last year did I leave Charterhouse; now I am sitting at Cambridge writing a letter home, with a mind perfectly contented with the change the year has wrought in my situation. I have been going about in my walks lately drawing churches: here is one" (a vignette of Grandchester Church attached). "The country is ugly in the extreme, but there are a number of quaint old buildings, and pretty bits scattered about. I think I shall take solitary walks, and see how I get on in the way of drawing. I called yesterday at one o'clock on a man to walk, and found him in bed! Men are here very fond of going to bed late and getting up late—the former of these I like not, nor, I hope, the latter. . . . I have been drinking tea at Dr. Thackeray's, reading Æschylus and Mathematics and 'Zillah'" (a novel), "and playing two games at chess, having been in-doors almost all day

from the rain. Dr. T. has a young son, an Etonian of course. I have asked the little fellow to come and see me. I cannot read Mathematics of an evening. I in general have a man, or go to a man and have a chat for an hour or two."

"I had a conversation with my private tutor this morning, and he told me that in May we shall have a week's examination of eight hours a day. It has rather put me on my mettle, but when I look at the men about me I shall think myself lucky if I have as many below me as above me. I cannot, however, do more than my best, which I am determined to do. I saw the Vice-Provost of King's to-day, who recommends me to keep 'Non-ens.' He says he will ask Peacock (one of our tutors) what plan he would recommend. Keeping 'Non-ens' will detain me another year at college."

"*March* 22, 1829.—I called on the two young Mr. Thackerays to-day. The eldest (the Fellow) asked me to wine with him on Monday. I have bought a set of foils and tackle. I have been fencing almost every day since I came here. . . ."

"*Sunday.*—I have no news to-day, but strong resolutions for to-morrow. I purpose to begin a more regular course of reading than I have hitherto done, for though I have read this week, I have not done so with the regularity essential to my well-doing. I shall therefore begin to-morrow and read from half-past eight o'clock till half-past one, and then again with my private tutor on alternate days from 4.30 to 5.30, or from five to six. The former is the more convenient time of the two, for that is the time when the wine-parties commence; I can therefore always plead an engagement on those days."

"We had a grand feast to-day in Hall: after dinner an immense silver cup was brought round filled with Audit Ale—good it was, but not so good as what we had at Dr. Thackeray's in bottle. We have a delightful organ in our chapel which you would like to hear. . . . Farewell till to-morrow night, dear mother, when I will tell you the result of resolutions.—W. M. T., his mark." [Here follows a monogram almost exactly the same as that he used in after-life.]

"*Monday.*—I have just been wining with Mr. Joseph Thackeray, of King's. I read all the morning, and walked till Hall. *Tuesday.*—I have followed up my reading to-day rather vigorously, though I find it a hard, hard matter; it goeth very much against the grain. . . . I went to see our library to-day, and to get out five stout quartos. It is a most splendid room. *Friday.*—I have just been drinking three cups of tea at Dr. Thackeray's, and another at a freshman's of our college of the name of Badger! He and I are going to read Greek Play together from eleven until twelve every day. I am getting more and more into the way of reading now. I go to Fawcett every other morning from eight to nine, to Fisher (the Mathematical lecturer) from nine to ten, and to Starr (the Classical one) from ten to eleven; then with Badger from eleven to twelve; twelve to half-past one Euclid or Algebra, and an hour in the evening at some one or other of the above, or perhaps at some of the collateral reading connected with the Thucydides or Æschylus. This is my plan, which I trust to be able to keep—when therefore I say nothing you may know I have kept it. . . . Tell father I answered five questions out of the twelve (four of them were props. in Euclid, and the other a long Algebraical one), and they were done most correctly."

"*Sunday.*—I went to the Vice-Provost of King's to wine yesterday. He treated me with some rich hock; never did I drink such. Mr. Thackeray told me that he thought every man should go abroad after he had taken his degree. . . . Remember me to George. I will send him my speech on the character of Napoleon, and some very interesting Algebraic *Formulæ*, with which, and discussion on the Greek Article, I think to amuse him. Whewell strongly recommends me not to go down at Easter; he says that it would be very much to my disadvantage. I have not spoken about your letter, your long, kind letter, but will do so more at length in another sheet of paper—so good-bye for the present, dearest mother."

"*Sunday night, April*, 1829.—I have just sent off my letter, and have no news, but I like to have something in hand, some link between me and home. I fell asleep to-day over the 'Life of

Cardinal Wolsey.' When I come home I will bring with me the 'Revolt of Islam,' by Percy Bysshe Shelley; it is (in my opinion) a most beautiful poem—though the story is absurd, and the republican sentiments conveyed in it, if possible, more absurd. *Monday.*—Badger and I are regular at the Greek Play. He came to me, however, to-day, rather indisposed, and so we read nothing, but instead looked over a splendid folio of prints taken from the statues in the Museum of Florence, which I have got out of the Trinity library to try and copy the hands and feet. I am going to wine at George Thackeray's to-morrow; he will be elected Fellow in a week or two. I do not know whether I should ask him in return—whether his dignity would allow him to come. I should much like to take to riding. I have been reading a great part of to-day in our magnificent library, which I had no business to do. My private tutor says that as I have not had the benefit of him in the whole term he will give me a fortnight's tuition in the vacation, which I think is handsome of him. . . . We have been into an examination in Algebra with the college tutor to-day, and I succeeded very tolerably."

"I have unluckily left my examination paper in the lecture-room, which, as it was adorned with a sweet little cherub, may strike the lecturer with admiration."

"I have just returned from a long debate at the Union, at which I had intended to offer my opinions; the meeting, however, adjourned to next Tuesday, when perhaps I may be more prepared. Shelley appears to me to have been a man of very strong and good feelings, all perverted by the absurd creed which he was pleased to uphold; a man of high powers, which his conceit led him to over-rate, and his religion prompted him to misuse. But I am talking to uninitiated ears. I think I said I should bring home Shelley's 'Revolt of Islam,' but I have rather altered my opinion, for it is an odd kind of book, containing poetry which would induce me to read it through, and sentiments which might strongly incline one to throw it into the fire. I saw to-day the engravings of Canova's works, in which I was very much disappointed; they look so mean and meagre and stiff and studied, to my ill-judging eye, that I cannot conceive how any man by such works could have risen to fame."

"A 'poem of mine' hath appeared in a weekly periodical here published, and called *The Snob*. I will bring it home with me. In a month's time I trust to be at home. My private tutor, for a wonder, was not up when I went to him at six this morning. I cut lecture this morning, and breakfasted with two Charterhouse masters, Penny and Dickens—who are Charterhouse masters all over. Young had a pleasant wine-party, at which for a short time I attended. 'Timbuctoo' received much laud. I could not help finding out that I was very fond of this same praise. The men knew not the author, but praised the poem; how eagerly I sucked it in! 'All is vanity!'"

"If I get a fifth class in the examination I shall be lucky. . . . *The Snob* goeth on prosperously. I have put 'Genevieve' into it with a little alteration. Sunday I was at St. Mary's, and heard a sermon from Blunt on the undesigned coincidences in Scripture. He was very ingenious, almost too much so. We had 'I know that my Redeemer liveth' in chapel. The organ was beautiful."

We have it on the authority of Trollope that "Timbuctoo" was a burlesque upon the prize poem of the year, written by Tennyson. Strange conjunction of the names to be! When I wrote in an earlier chapter of the portentous years which produced the four great Englishmen, I might have added the fifth. Two of Thackeray's stanzas ran thus:

"In Africa—a quarter of the world—
Men's skins are black; their hair is crisped and curled;
And somewhere there, unknown to public view,
A mighty city lies, called Timbuctoo.

* * * * * *

I see her tribes the hill of glory mount,
And sell their sugars on their own account,
While round her throne the prostrate nations come,
Sue for her rice, and barter for her rum."

I do not know that I see much promise of such a May in this. I do not know that readers will find much merit in the extracts from the young Cambridge diarist, which none the less I feel sure must interest them, even as they interest me. I am not sure that the interest is not in some sort the result of the absence of what, from a literary standpoint, men may call merit. Thackeray was a late-flowering plant, after all; and in this simple and touching record of home-loving young life, one is as slow as Dr. Thompson was to augur the future greatness of the prose-poet of "Vanity Fair." It is even younger in expression, I think, than the average expression of eighteen. I have known—and do know—men of worthy account in English letters, cotemporaries of my own, whose style has not surpassed, and does not now, the force that informed it in university life. This diary of Thackeray's is distinctly but a boy's—original only, perhaps, in its criticism on Shelley and Canova; striking only in its anticipation of the two great subjects of his pen—the "Snob" and the "All is Vanity." Curious that little outburst to his mother even then, before the cup of vanity had been either tasted or filled.

On the other hand, how delightful the consistent development of that idle-industrious mind, and the dear little domestic pharisaisms that all nice boys write home. If the child liked Chiswick because "there were so many good boys to play with," and the boy meant "to get up at five o'clock every morning, and so get four hours' reading before breakfast," did not the youth propose to "think in Greek," to trace the influence of Homer upon everything in general if he could but find the time, and

upon the recurring Sunday to "have strong resolutions for to-morrow"? And all these same propositions and resolutions were to end in—"Vanity Fair." Thackeray is not the only mighty man of valour and of power who has set up for ever, in a place very different from the Tartarean Shades, his especial fragment of the pavement of Good Intent! On the whole, we are inclined to think from the record that Thackeray did with his Cambridge days very much the best he could have done. He acquired a good general basis of classic scholarship, whereon to build an English as good as the best of them. He won and left behind him the name he envied and loved the best, and was "pray God, a gentleman." And he made to himself friends who endured and valued—Thompson and Brookfield, Edward Fitzgerald and Mitchell Kemble, Monckton Milnes and James Spedding, John Sterling and Alfred Tennyson. Yet to the curious inquirer sometimes, as with a sense of tears and of regret, among these world-known names will come a vision of that "Freshman of our College" of the curious name, by diary the most faithful of them all. What became of Badger?

The blow of grace to Thackeray's college career seems to have been that mysterious "*Non-ens.*" It was—is, perhaps—a corruption in Granta's vernacular of "Non-annus"—a No-year Man; one, that is, who came up, as early in this chapter it was told how Thackeray did, in the Lent term instead of in October. Being so behind the rest, he had to meet in the May examination men with three months' advantage of him, or to hold back for a whole year in order to have as much advantage of them.

So, at least, the phrase is described to me. And because of the complications rising out of this hard condition of non-entity, and very likely from other reasons also, connected with health and brains, strength and an ample independence, and Russellian views in high places about his qualifications for well-regulated use, Thackeray left Cambridge at the age of nineteen.

This chapter of his life should close here, but for one word. To the sons of England's great Universities, whose name is legion, there is no more attractive passage in fiction than that which was the fruit of those two years of residence, the Oxbridge episode of Mr. Arthur Pendennis. How deliciously fanciful is the jumble between the two sister-seats, though the true parent is palpable enough to the initiate. How pleasantly the gyp and the scout are harmonized in the skip; and how young-man-like and conceited and self-conscious altogether Master Pen's entrance upon the fascinating course, on which the author moralizes in his truest philosophic vein. How pleasant the investment in the "pretty college cap," and how odd that Thackeray should have forgotten to introduce its early extinction, and the "wretched old thing" left instead. How real that "atrocious little Foker," Mr. Buck the tutor, and the rest; and poor Pen's early stumbles on the youthful Road to Ruin. And the smart new clothes for the Long Vacation, and the new French watch and chain that replaced the poor father's portly chronometer, and Pen's bills, and Laura's sacrifice, and Helen's tears. Never has the old old story been better told, down to the time when "the melancholy figure might be seen shirking about the

lonely quadrangles in his battered old cap and torn gown," and on the day of the appearance of the class-list a certain "dreadful rumour rushed through the University—

> " ' I have not got my degree. I—I'm plucked, Sir.'
>
> . . . . . .
>
> ' Was it—was it done in *public*, Sir ? ' the Major said."

One wonders from which of his many allies or acquaintances, or from whom of them combined, Thackeray drew Arthur Pendennis. In this case certainly, unlike the process usually attributed to authors and their heroes, not from himself—unless, indeed, in one instance my rash conjecture have a base, and there was an Emily Fotheringay in the flesh to suggest to parents and guardians a course of University-cure. All that our poor Pen then was, Thackeray in his honourable course at that critical time was not. Neither selfish nor conceited, not noisy and dissipated at college, ungrateful and loveless at home—but full of home-thoughts and loving-kindness, tender, modest, and manly, well-graced and pure.

CHAPTER V.

(By Herman Merivale.)

THACKERAY, the Junior Soph—as the second year men were then called—left Cambridge degreeless before he was nineteen, and after his two years of residence. He did not care to follow out the mathematical course necessary to the full term, and the "tall figure, with plenty of colour and masses of dark hair"—not then yet at its full height of six feet and more—was transferred to the larger stage of life. Among his later studies he appears to have ensued something of Political Economy, and attended lectures on the Inspiring Science. Those lectures may have been the final blow to the novelist's academical ambitions. Many years afterwards a friend of his remembers the sudden arrival of Thackeray at his house in a cab full of drawing-room mirrors, and offering to make him a present of as many as he liked. In a back street of what he called "Sohovia," says his friend, he had seen some children crying for bread. Their father was ill and out of work. He was a maker of looking-glasses for the trade, and had these left upon his hands. Whereupon Thackeray bought them all at the maker's own price. Very bad political economy indeed! But Thackeray had a science of his own where

doing kindnesses was concerned. Somewhere have I read of the friend who found him in his Paris hotel, inscribing on a large pill-box in his own hand, "One to be taken when required." He had come across some old gentlewoman past work and in need, and he had made up his prescription in the pill-box. It was sovereigns.

I like to think of Thackeray's entrance into the big world outside. There are few better openings out there than his, with his little private fortune (£20,000 it has been called, but I believe it was £500 a year), his large sound frame and health, and his brain of corresponding build, which to him at all events must now have been more than whispering the promise of To Be—if it had puzzled his aunt in childhood, it was to weigh 58½ oz. when he died. And with this hope and power before him he entered on the great education of travel. He wandered through Europe and dwelt in her capitals, and gathered his experience of her ways. Paris and Rome, Dresden and Weimar—he trod their pavements and stored up their lessons; and became one of the completest men of the world who was ever likewise one of its greatest authors. "*Mores hominum multorum vidit et urbes*"—and, idle and unprofitable dog that he was, he forgot nothing. If others have owned the Epitome of Knowledge, his was the Epitome of Observation. In Paris he was as true a Parisian as the veriest stepper of the Boulevards, as much in the manner of the "Land of Bohemia" of that forgotten day, as a Musset or a Murger himself—ready to sing of "Bouillabaisse" or the New Street of the Little Fields; or out of that deeper power of his to revive the Revolution, like a panorama, in the

"Chronicle of the Drum,"—in the pages of "The Newcomes" to photograph Boulogne and its cliffs and nurses, and in Madame de Florac and her son to picture two different phases of French-in-English with a delicacy of touch, half laughter and half tears, that we are not like to see again; then to be as much at home with so great a variety as the gaming Duchess of Ivry and poor little Antoinette:

"*Pourquoi?* Mamma used never to speak to me except sometimes before the world, before ladies—that understands itself. When her gentleman came, she put me to the door; she gave me *tapes*, *oh oui*, she gave me *tapes*."

And if this was not enough, he would meet Clive and Ethel on a mountain pass, as if he had lived in the tourist-world all his life; he would be the Bursch in Germany and the art-student in Rome. Monte Carlo might read its story and its types in Thackeray at Baden; Pumpernickel recall the little German Courts; and the "Rhine in the distance flashing by the Seven Mountains" record how varied and watchful was that aimless traveller's taste. Go thou with Clive and J. J. by the steamboat to Antwerp (irresistibly suggestive in passing of that other giant and his Ankworks Package so very like a whale—"I wish it was in Jonadge's belly, I do"), and, if thou love pictures, as thou scarce livest if thou dost not, then—

"Imagine how the two young men rejoiced in one of the most picturesque cities in the world; where they went back straightway into the sixteenth century; where the inn at which they stayed (delightful old Grand Laboureur, thine ancient walls are levelled! thy comfortable hospitalities exist no more!) seemed such a hostelry

as that where Quentin Durward first saw his sweetheart; where knights of Velazquez or burgomasters of Rubens seemed to look from the windows of the tall gabled houses and the quaint porches; where the Bourse still stood, the Bourse of three hundred years ago, and you had but to supply figures with beards and ruffs, and rapiers and trunk-hose, to make the picture complete; where to be awakened by the carillon of the bells was to waken to the most delightful sense of life and happiness; where nuns, actual nuns, walked the streets, and every figure in the Place de Meir, and every devotee at church, kneeling and draped in black, or entering the confessional (actually the confessional), was a delightful subject for the new sketch-book."

Rolling stones gather no moss, they say. This one did. He began at Godesberg, of course. I never could understand why for so long a period everybody did. Our parents always took or sent us there. It was the case with mine. Yet Godesberg was nothing in particular, just too far from the Rhine not to be near it. Now it is a suburban paradise of flowers for graceful Bonn, to rejoice the eye with beauties of its own. Then it was one road, two inns, and a ruined tower, like a toy spy-glass. But there Thackeray stayed for a month, with a friend, to improve his German, to see many duels of Bonn students and illustrate them in his letters home, and to buy Schiller in eighteen volumes. He had taken introductory German lessons from a certain Herr Troppeneger, in London, and July 30, 1830, finds him writing from Coblentz of the beauties of the Rhine as "almost equal to the Thames"; delighting in the beauties of the Prussian military music, and meeting

"with some good figures among the people. Here are two (full-lengths) who were on board the steamer. The boy with the pipe

was exactly like Raphael, and the man would have made a good study for a Buccaneer."

It is clear that Drawing was the art which still held Thackeray most.

At Weimar the traveller who had begun with Napoleon went on with Goethe, and readers of Lewes's life may find his description of their interview, though there appears to have been more than one, from the account given to his mother. The introduction was on Oct. 20, 1830, where he describes the German sage as having received him with great kindness and consideration, at a tea-party, to which he had especially invited him at midday, amongst other English and some of his particular favourites in the town.

"Everybody talks French here," he writes, "so that I have had more practice for my French than for my German. There is a Court twice a week; tea and cards, the latter for the elder part of the community. The gentlemen are obliged to stand from seven till half-past nine, when all the world at Weimar goes to bed. The weather is what is called *himmlisch hübsch*—that is to say, warm enough to roast you in the day, and cold enough to freeze you in the evening. . . . Madame de Goethe is very kind. . . . The other evening I went to call on her, and found her with three Byrons, a Moore, and a Shelley on her table!"

About two months later—for Thackeray's visit to Weimar lasted some little time—he had an opportunity of being impressed by the old Teuton's characteristic vitality. Goethe burst a blood-vessel at eighty-three, was nearly carried off at the moment, and within a few days impressed his young acquaintance by writing and

drinking harder than ever. He "is a noble poet, and an interesting old man to speak to, and look upon, as I ever saw," says Thackeray. And indeed it is useless to make laws for brains and constitutions of this kind. They go their own road to the end. Thackeray, however, much as he admired Goethe's works, had a strong personal preference for Schiller's. He may have been something swayed in this, perhaps, by personal sympathies. Loose-livers like the older poet were not to Thackeray's mind, with his chivalrous respect for women, his simple and living faith, and his sympathy with tears and pain. He liked good people best, and Schiller's life was blameless as his own. But beyond that—perhaps as a necessary consequence of it—his literary sympathies took the same flight. *William Tell* spoke more to his heart than *Faust*, with the former's sweet presentment of the love of home. There are many of us who in our hearts cherish much the same weakness of preference for the lesser name, and feel a gratitude to Thackeray for his outspoken opinion. "I have been reading Shakespeare in German; if I could ever do the same for Schiller in English, I should be proud of having conferred a benefit on my country. . . . I do believe him to be, after Shakespeare, The Poet." Truly this was a man of many schemes, casting about for that which was within him, and proposing to translate Schiller at the outset of his life, even as at the close of it he had stocked his library with materials for a history of the reign of Queen Anne. Meanwhile he sketched and laughed, and watched and lived, and, like everybody else, apparently went the way of all flesh, and found a flame in Weimar which

went out, and left nothing but cinders. So, at least, he wrote to his mother, to whom he continued to pour out all his schemes and dreams, in letters not meant for public use, save at the wish of his nearest at some later day, full of boylike merriment (he was not yet twenty,) and sacred tenderness:

"'This world is empty,
This heart is dead,
Its hopes and its ashes
For ever are fled.'

As Schiller says; or rather as is said in an admirable translation of that great poet by a rising young man of the name of Thackeray."

Such was this Romeo's epitaph on his whilome Rosaline, whose name history records not. I think she must have been fair and flaxen, with round light blue eyes and a peach complexion; that she said "*Ach wunderschön!*" when he talked his young dreams to her; that she taught him quite as much German as his professors; and that she certainly figures somewhere amongst those much-discussed phantoms, his "originals." And I think I should like to believe that she married Badger.

Thackeray was still meditating a profession, wishing to be an attaché, but nearly decided on the Bar, and feeling that the beginning of life in earnest must be soon, for one who had a competence but no more, and had no mind to be nothing but an idler. But I suspect that it was that life at Weimar that fixed the bent before he knew it, and riveted, "in der Stille," the chains with which Literature binds her true votaries, whether they will or no—sure of her own in time, whatever profession it may

choose them to think they follow. What else could the life at Weimar do? The very name is suggestive of a Court of Letters which has no parallel in story; and that a young man like Thackeray, fervent of heart, eager of years, and imaginative of brain, should come out of the living presence of Goethe, and scarce less living memory of Schiller, unspoiled for the learned professions, and anything other than an author foredoomed, was—as his Fräulein must have told him—"ganz unmöglich." His only regret was that he was too late for the full fruition of that earthly paradise. "It must have been a fine sight twenty years ago," he writes, "this little Court, with Goethe and Schiller and Wieland and the old Grand Duke and Duchess to ornament it." It must indeed. If we were permitted to choose for ourselves certain glimpses into the life of the past, few of those who bathe at the fount of letters but would ask for a plunge into the high-tide of Weimar. It is curious to find that, when Thackeray was there, Society agreed with him in voting Schiller to be the greater man. Why Thackeray did is clear—as the reasons for his literary verdicts always are clear, whether on Shelley and Schiller in his youth, or on his English brother humourists in his manhood. But that this should have been the general verdict is a puzzle: unless the key is to be looked for in that odd old weakness of mankind in literary and artistic matters, when it wants to be thought critical. Goethe was still guilty of not being dead.

A translation of Schiller was not the only literary scheme which Weimar suggested to the traveller's young mind. He meditated, when spring should come, a

pedestrian tramp over the Hartz Mountains, and again over Saxon Switzerland, and at some later date a return to the less-known tracts of Germany, with sketch-book and note-book, and "I fear still a dictionary," in order to book-make a little on his own account.

"The People of Germany are not known in England," he writes, "and the more I learn of them, the more interesting they appear to me—customs, and costumes, and National songs, stories, &c., with which the country abounds, and which I should be glad to know, and the 'British Public' also, I think."

Oh, schemes of youth! oh, dreams of the hour! *Dans ses châteaux d'Espagne qu'on est bien à vingt ans!* But this time, and in this case, the dreams had in them more stuff than dreams are made of, and more of substance than the mere promise of May. For the rest of his time at Weimar Thackeray studied, and sketched in pen-and-ink for children, sketches still to be found in albums in the town, and some of which it was his pride to know that Goethe had approved. He "took a little recreation in the fields of Civil Law," and was not amused by Justinian. He did not look forward to the Law as a pleasure, but as a "noble and tangible object, an honourable profession, and *I trust in God*" (so as afterwards, and always, reverently,) "a certain fame." And quaint and delightful was his confession that his way of winning the fame, so far, was to lie on the sofa and read novels; and—think about it. Meanwhile he enjoyed that friendly German city-life to the full: was received with all hospitality at the Court as elsewhere; knew all the little "Gesellchaft," and found that the chief obstacle to learning

German was that all the young ladies spoke English so well. "I think," he wrote in after years, "I have never seen a society more simple, charitable, courteous, gentlemanlike, than that of the dear little Saxon city where the good Schiller and the great Goethe lived and lie buried." Free he escaped out of the place, however, perhaps by grace of the shadowy Fräulein. For he found certain old ladies well disposed to him, and hinting that they did not want *much* for Melanie and Eugenie, but only a competence. He was not disposed to share his just then, and left Weimar full—how full it must have been—of as mighty a *genius loci* as ever mastered men. It can scarcely be a mere imagination of my own to hold that the world owes a debt to Goethe and Schiller over and beyond those it acknowledges—Thackeray.

CHAPTER VI.

(By Herman Merivale.)

AT twenty years old Thackeray was in chambers in Hare Court, Temple. The Inns of Court, the dinners, and the Templar's life, found, like his other experiences, full expression through his pen. Poor little trumpery Fanny Bolton seems to wander with us in our walks abroad in the Temple Gardens, now with the exquisite Pen, and now with dirty Sam Huxter. It makes small difference to her.

"'You remember your poem of "Ariadne in Naxos?"' Warrington said,—'devilish bad poetry it was, to be sure.'

"'*Après?*' asked Pen, in a great state of excitement.

"'When Theseus left Ariadne, do you remember what happened to her, young fellow?'

"'It's a lie, it's a lie! You don't mean that!' cried out Pen, starting up, his face turning red.

"'Sit down, stoopid,' Warrington said, and with two fingers pushed Pen back into his seat again. 'It's better for you as it is, young one.'"

Still does Hare Court suggest mine honest Laura Bell in all the witchery of cap and gown—first promise of the sweet girl-graduates who blush no longer, as she did, at heir academic dress; and years later, when I was myself

living on a third floor in Garden Court—number three it was—I remember how the great man honoured me by bringing one of his gracious favourites, Lady Colvile, to tea in the little rooms, and his pleasure at finding in them the genuine originals of Chevalier Strong's chambers in Shepherd's Inn, with the water-pipe and gutter which served him as a retreat from his creditors, watchful behind the sported oak, into Costigan and Bows' nest next door. Modern improvements have rebuilt Garden Court; the noisy little fountain which babbled at its head has been very properly silenced, and the classic place of the Chevalier knows him no more. But there they were in my youth, to witness if I lie. Thackeray had his originals in brick and mortar, as in flesh and blood.

It is to be feared that Thackeray did not take kindly to the Law. In a letter to his mother he sketched himself in a blue coat on a high stool, while a queer client, in the shape of an old gentleman with an umbrella, stands on one side, and a very small clerk in a green coat on the other, trying to get at his master with five folios by a step-ladder. On the same letter he sketched himself in Indian ink, asleep on a pallet-bed, with a dream-procession of W. M. T. in wig and gown—then horsemen, coaches, and carriage, with the Lord Chancellor inside—and at the foot of the bed—Death. Soon he writes:—

"I go pretty regularly to my pleader's, and sit with him till past five, and sometimes six; then I come home and read and dine till about nine or past, when I am glad enough to go out for an hour and look at the world. As for the theatre, I scarcely go there more than once a week, which is moderate indeed for me. In a few days come the Pantomimes: huzza!

"I have been to Cambridge, where I stayed four days feasting on my old friends, so hearty and hospitable. . . . I could have stayed there a month, and fed on each. . . .

"If ever there was—— I was going to say something against the law, but won't. . . . I have read the last of Walter Scott's novels, 'Castle Dangerous,' and thought it mighty poor. One gets tired of descriptions of helmets and surcoats. . . . On Christmas day I dine with my uncle Frank. . . . He is very kind, but asks me to dinner too often—three times a week." [Uncles! remember young Nature, and beware!]

"This lawyer's preparatory education is certainly one of the most cold-blooded, prejudiced pieces of invention that ever a man was slave to. . . . A fellow should properly do and think of nothing else than L A W. Never mind. I begin to find out that people are much wiser than I am (which is a rare piece of modesty in me), and that old heads do better than young ones, that is in their generation, for I am sure that a young man's ideas, however absurd and rhapsodical they are, though they mayn't smack so much of experience as those of these old calculating codgers, contain a great deal more nature and virtue. . . . As far as reading history merely to know facts, I apprehend that such a knowledge would enable a man to show off in society, but would do little else for him. . . . May 22, 1832. . . . The sun won't shine into Taprell's chambers, and the high stools don't blossom and bring forth buds. . . . I do so long for fresh air, and fresh butter I would say only it isn't romantic. . . . Yesterday I took a long walk to Kensington Gardens, and had a pleasant stroll on the green banks of the Serpentine. I wonder people don't frequent them more: they are far superior to any of the walks in Paris that are so much admired and talked of."

It is amusing to find in these little scraps of diary the raw material so well worked up in "Pendennis," to proves that, if Law be a jealous mistress, Literature is a more seductive wife. Who maun to Cupar will to Cupar; and who must write will write. There was no affinity between Thackeray and the woolsack whatsoever.

"On the other side of the third landing, where Pen and Warrington live, till long after midnight sits Mr. Paley, who took the highest honours, and who is a fellow of his college, who will sit and read and note cases until two o'clock in the morning; who will rise at seven, and be at the pleader's chambers as soon as they are open, where he will work until an hour before dinner-time; who will come home from Hall and read and note cases again until dawn next day, when perhaps Mr. Arthur Pendennis and his friend Mr. Warrington are returning from some of their wild expeditions. How differently employed Mr. Paley has been. He has not been throwing himself away: he has only been bringing a great intellect laboriously down to the comprehension of a mean subject, and in his fierce grasp of that, resolutely excluding from his mind all higher thoughts, all better things, all the wisdom of philosophers and historians, all the thoughts of poets; all wit, fancy, reflection, art, love, truth altogether—so that he may master that enormous legend of the law, which he proposes to gain his livelihood by expounding. Warrington and Paley had been competitors for university honours in former days, and had run each other hard; and everybody said now that the former was wasting his time and energies, whilst all people praised Paley for his industry. There may be doubts, however, as to which was using his time best. The one could afford time to think, and the other never could; the one could have sympathies and do kindnesses, and the other must needs be always selfish. He could not cultivate a friendship or do a charity, or admire a work of genius, or kindle at the sight of beauty or the sound of a sweet song—he had no time, and no eyes for anything but his law-books. All was dark outside his reading-lamp. Love and Nature and Art (which is the expression of our praise and sense of the beautiful world of God) were shut out from him. And as he turned off his lonely lamp at night, he never thought but that he had spent the day profitably, and went to sleep alike thankless and remorseless. But he shuddered when he met his old companion Warrington on the stairs, and shunned him as one that was doomed to perdition."

If I give this extract at length rather than choicer passages, it is because, as far as space and means will allow, it is my object rather to trace the story and

character of Thackeray the man than to dwell at length upon his creations and his plots. The last would be difficult, because he never made any. He let his stories weave themselves: and this has curiously saved him from the novelist's fate of the "*dramaturge malgré lui.*" Scott and Dickens have made the fortunes of many managers; but he would be a bold man who tried to make a play out of "Pendennis," or "The Newcomes." Yet, in the perversity of human ambitions, I believe there is nothing Thackeray would have liked better than to see himself "made a play of."

This was no law-lover then; and with the truest sympathy will fellow-sufferers read his views of those dreadful summer afternoons in the pupil's room of the Conveyancer or Special Pleader, devoted to doing your master's work for him and paying him for the privilege, and with no visible prospect of return whatever. Often, I feel sure, must Thackeray's sympathy with some suffering young legal Badger have induced him to sacrifice the pleasures of the parchment to a friend's wish for a day up the river. But there is a reverse to the medal. If he had gone further, I know no man who would have relished more than Thackeray the delights of circuit life. Those are of course rapidly vanishing, with all the other charms of leisure, before the crushing march of Fuss. But they were delightful in my own day—must have been more so in his. To travel from town to town with some especial chum or chums—to be welcomed at the pleasantest houses and in the pleasantest scenes—to rejoice in the brightest talk and keenest rub of wits—the summer cricket-match,

the winter rubber, and the cheery mess—to receive the domiciliary visit of a little brief, paid angel-wise, with outward rejoicing and secret discontent—all this at the age when youth is at its friendliest and best, is an experience not to be regretted. As of a classic education, so say I of the early curricle of "the called": that, even for the idlest of the prentices, in securing for scholarship and letters a knowledge of the wider world, there is, to the man with his wits about him, no training like it. The pleasantest company of talkers are still the Bar.

If Thackeray had gone a little further than Paley's chambers, what a circuit-novel he would have written. But here a new departure tempted him. It is a mistake to suppose that his candidature for Oxford proved a new or superficial interest in politics. 1832 was the famous Reform year; and it would have been strange if that great intelligence had been indifferent to the stir around him. Just one month after the letter from Taprell's chambers, that unseductive man had lost his truant pupil for a time, just at full law-tide, when—as usual with him—he ought to have been most industrious.

"*June* 25, 1832. POLWELLAN, WEST LOOE, CORNWALL.

"Are you surprised, dear Mother, at the direction? Certainly not more prepared for it than I was myself, but you must know that on Tuesday in last week I went to breakfast with Charles Buller, and he received a letter from his constituents at Liskeard requesting him immediately to come down; he was too ill, but instead deputed Arthur Buller and myself—so off we set that same night by the mail, arrived at Plymouth the next day, and at Liskeard the day after, where we wrote addresses, canvassed farmers, and dined with attorneys. Then we came on to Mr. Buller's, and here I have been very happy since last Friday. On Wednesday last I

was riding for twelve hours' canvassing—rather a feat for me, and considering I have not been on horseback for eight months, my stiffness yesterday was by no means surprising; but it is seven o'clock of a fine summer's morning, so I have no fatigue to complain of. *I have been lying awake this morning meditating on the wise and proper manner I shall employ my fortune in when I come of age, which, if I live so long, will take place in three weeks. First, I do not intend to quit my little chambers in the Temple, then I will take a regular monthly income which I will never exceed.* . . . God bless you, dear Mother; write directly and give your orders. . . . Charles Buller comes down at the end of next week—if you want me sooner I will come, if not I should like to wait for the Reform rejoicings which are to take place on his arrival, particularly as I have had a great share in the canvassing.'

This picture seems to me very vivid. The young guerilla hero, at the personal age, and in the historic crisis, of very *Sturm und Drang*—the *Annual Registers* and chronicles of the time give us something of an insight of what the commotion was—"turned his charger as he spake," and shakes the dust off his feet upon the stools at Taprell's, which had dust enough already, and rides away for a twelve hours' stretch over the moors of Cornwall, to plunge headlong into the feverish delights of platform and canvassing—perhaps the keenest form of interest and excitement that can occupy the human brain. How it held Thackeray's, let "The Newcomes" tell. It is impossible once to indulge in it, and, for whatever reason, to give it up, without feeling a blank in the activities of life which is very difficult to fill. One can imagine how Thackeray threw himself into the battle, by the side of such a friend as Charles Buller. But still, in the middle of it, comes the same old saving clause: to please his mother and appease him-

self, what a very good boy he is going to be when he joins the regulars—some day. Wise and proper he will be before all things; and that regular monthly income he will never—no never—exceed. It was a modest bachelor's income after all. But alas for Taprell's! alas for the monthly income! and alas for the woolsack and for the generous young dreamer! As Dickens writes in his "Hard Times"—"These things were never to be." On August 8th the wanderer is writing from Paris—to tell how the young Napoleon is gone:—

"I read the other day in the papers—*Hier S. M. a envoyé complimenter l'Ambassadeur de l'Autriche sur la mort du Duc de Reichstadt.* It is as fine a text for a sermon as any in the Bible—this poor young man dying, as many say, of poison, and L. P. presenting his compliments on the occasion. Oh, Genius, Glory, Ambition, what ought you to learn from this? and what might I not teach, only I am hungry and going—to breakfast!"

This last passage seems to me the first in his journals and letters to suggest the natural Thackeray style. And about this time came the evil days. Tempted with other youngsters into the toils of sharpers, he lost much of his money at play—and more of it in two newspapers in which he invested with his step-father, one called *The Constitutional*, and the other *The National Standard* —a Journal of Literature, Science, Music, Theatricals, and the Fine Arts. *Quid feret hoc magno?* Well, not much. This mighty weekly, born on the 5th of January, 1833, *obiit* the 1st of February, 1834. Thackeray's editorship began about the nineteenth number, and he seems to have done a good deal of variety-work for the paper, of which I quote part of a

mock sonnet, written to illustrate a drawing of Braham, the tenor, in a sailor's dress, standing by the sea-shore, with the traditional clothes'-bag and three-hatted Hebrew in the background, and a Jew's-harp in the sky with a chaplet of boys round it. The sonnet is ascribed to "W. Wordsworth."

> "Say not that Judah's harp hath lost its tone,
> Or that no bard hath found it where it hung
> Broken and lonely, voiceless and unstrung,
> Beside the sluggish stream of Babylon:
> Slowman repeats the strain his fathers sung,
> And Judah's burning lyre is Braham's own."

Again, in a review of a poem of Montgomery's ("The Angel of Life,") Thackeray emulates Macaulay in a way of his own, by quoting a dozen lines in inverted order, as the result of a supposed mistake of the printer's, who didn't correct it because they read as well one way as the other. How like Mr. Yellowplush's later views of some rather mixed similes in the "Sea Captain!" Then comes a humorous tale called the "Devil's Wager," and a portrait of Louis Philippe as a kind of Robert Macaire, with some lines of no note except that they anticipate the novelist's great war with Snobbery by first applying the epithet to the "man with the umbrella"—which historic name for the Citizen King, by the by, was invented by Thackeray. In "Lovel the Widower" Mr. Batchelor has something of this venture to tell; and Mr. Adolphus Simcoe, in *Punch*, suffering from a combined love of drink and letters, finishes himself by starting a journal called *The Lady's*

Lute. It runs for six months, when ". . . its chords were rudely snapped asunder, and he who had swept them with such joy went forth a wretched and heart-broken man."

Indian Banks being responsible for further losses besides this ill-starred literary start, Thackeray turned to his first love, Art, and went to prepare a home in Paris for his parents and himself. They left Devonshire about this time. On the 23rd of December, 1833, he writes :—

"I have been very comfortably installed in the new house for ten days, and like much my little study and my airy bedroom. I am sure we shall be as happy here as possible; and I believe that I ought to thank Heaven for making me poor, as it has made me much happier than I should have been with the money. I spend all day now, dear Mother, at the *Atelier*, and am very well satisfied with the progress that I make. I think that in a year, were I to work hard, I might paint something worth looking at, but it requires at least that time to gain any readiness with the brush. . . . The theatres are not very brilliant. I go to the Italian Opera, where the company is very good, and where there is a beautiful creature called Grisi."

Thackeray had always his say upon the theatrical favourites of the day; and the published letters tell us how seventeen years later he thought Madeleine Brohan beautiful but affected, and how he was taken to Adèle Page's *loge*.

"Not a box, but O! gracious goodness, a dressing-room. The *peignoir* of black satin which partially enveloped her perfect form, only served to heighten, &c., which it could but partially do, &c. Her lips are really as red as, &c. Her voice is delicious, her eyes,

O ! they flashed, &c., upon me . . . and *O ! mon Dieu*, she has asked me to go and see her . . . *la ravissante, la semillante, la frétillante Adèle.*"

The sequel of the little adventure is worth noting. Thackeray ventured and went ; was received in a yellow satin drawing-room where he was assured that the lady's only fault was that her heart was too good, paid her unblushing compliments, and left her to think that "the enormous old Englishman is rapturously in love with her. But she will never see him again, that faithless giant. I am past the age when Fotheringays inflame." That passage confirms my theory that there was once a real Fotheringay somewhere about in Devon; and if such a method of constructing the story of a life wants precedent, it is to be found in Thackeray's own treatment of Dicky Steele—that boy who, "besides being very kind, lazy, and good-natured, invariably went into debt with the tart-woman . . . exhibited an early fondness and capacity for drinking mum and sack, and borrowed from all his comrades who had money to lend." Whereon Thackeray remarks that he has no authority whatever for such a libel, except that the boy being father to the man, that is simply what Dicky Steele must have been.

In 1836 Thackeray first attempted authorship in London and Paris at once, by issuing a small folio with six tinted lithographs, called "Flore et Zéphyr : Ballet mythologique dédié à—par Théophile Wagstaff." A good description of it is given in *The North British Review*, as illustrated on the cover, between *à* and *par*, by Flore herself, rosy and bedizened, with jaded smirk and eyelids

down, oppressed with modesty and glory—with a long nose, thin sinewy hands, and a petticoat like an inverted muslin tulip, at top of a very professional pair of legs in the only attitude impossible to the genuine article. The first plate gives Flore and Zéphyr tripping to the footlights as *La Danse* making an offering on the altar of Harmony (an old fiddle), the dancers paying, characteristically, no attention to the altar behind them, and a great deal to our friends in front. And the two last are the *Retraite de Flore*, where the lady is to be found with her mother and two admirers, Zéphyr being conspicuous by his absence.

"This," says the writer of the *Review*, "is in Thackeray's strong, unflinching line. One lover is a young dandy without forehead or chin, sitting idiotically astride his chair. To him the old lady, who has her slight rouge, too, and is in a homely shawl and muff, having walked, is making faded love. In the centre is the fair darling herself, still on tiptoe, and wrapped up, but not too much, for her *fiacre*. With his back to the comfortable fire, and staring wickedly at her, is the other lover, a big, burly, elderly man, probably well-to-do on the Bourse, and with a wife and family at home in their beds. The last exhibits *Les délassements de Zéphyr*. That hard-working and homely personage is resting his arm on the chimney-piece, taking a huge pinch of snuff from the box of a friend, with a refreshing expression of satisfaction, the only bit of nature as yet. A dear little innocent pot-boy, such as only Thackeray knew how to draw, is gazing and waiting upon the two, holding up a tray from the nearest tavern, on which is a great pewter-pot of foaming porter for Zéphyr, and a rummer of steaming brandy-and-water for his friend, who has come in from the cold air. These drawings are lithographed by Edward Morton, son of 'Speed the Plough,' and are done with that delicate strength and truth for which this excellent but little known artist is always to be praised. In each corner is the monogram, W. T., which appears so often after-

wards with the M. added, and is itself superseded by the well-known pair of spectacles. Thackeray must have been barely five-and-twenty when this was published by Mitchell in Bond Street. It can hardly be said to have sold."

The article proceeds to comment on the ridicule Thackeray always loved to cast on anything ugly and absurd in his love of truth and pureness.

CHAPTER VII.

(By Frank T. Marzials.)

IT is a thousand pities, though the fancy may seem quaint, that Thackeray could not, speaking as it were *ab extra*, have included in the series of his Lectures on the Humourists, a lecture upon himself. Had this been possible, had he been able, for such a purpose, to divest himself of his own personality, and treat of his own life and works in ignorance that they were his own, and with the same detachment of spirit, though all loving and kindly, as he treated, for instance, of the life and works of Goldsmith—had such a lecture, in short, come within the sphere of practical literature, what an admirable lecture it would have been ! And no passages in it would have been more brilliant, more full of a genial and tolerant philosophy, than those which described the struggles and vicissitudes, the sorrows and pleasures, all the ups and downs of his career, between the time when, being still a very young man, he lost his money, and the time, some dozen years later, when he stepped, as the author of "Vanity Fair," into the first rank of the world's novelists.

But though such a lecture is not and could not be, and though Thackeray, with all his fondness for half-confidences and glimpses of self-revelation, wrote nothing that can be regarded as direct autobiography, yet still it is not impossible to reproduce from his works a fairly accurate picture of his life and its surroundings during the years in question. Dickens, Thackeray's great rival, was not a bookish man, and in his novels ignores the world of letters. Amid the throng of his characters one looks in vain for a specimen of the writer class, or only finds, at most, some slight caricature, like the rival editors in "Pickwick," or the staff of the *Rowdy Journal*, in "Martin Chuzzlewit," or Mr. Slum, the poet, in "The Old Curiosity Shop." True, in "David Copperfield," the best beloved of his books, and also the most autobiographical, the hero is successively reporter, journalist, successful novelist, all that Dickens himself had been. But for anything that we hear of him specially as a literary man, David Copperfield might just as well have belonged to any other profession. Except when he is studying short-hand, we never see him at work. We have no means of following his career as an author. We are not introduced to his editors, his publishers, his companions of the pen. All that is literary about him is kept quite in the far background. His story, after he has once mastered the reporter's craft, furnishes scarcely a hint that would be of use in writing the story of Dickens's purely literary career. And this is the only one of his novels in which Dickens introduces any writer who might not be a character in a farce. But with Thackeray it is quite different. *He* introduces us

to the world of letters constantly. Bookish himself, largely read, a keen critic, a student of literature as well as of life, and of literature in its relation to life, he is always pleased when he can take us with him into the society of bookmen and pressmen. Henry Esmond moves among the wits of the Augustan time of Anne,—does not disdain to compose a play, or imitate Steele's papers in *The Spectator*. George Warrington, the twin-hero of "the Virginians," is a playwright too, a writer of tragedies if you please, and tries, in his day of poverty, to make what living he can by his pen. And coming to Thackeray's tales of contemporary life, which indeed are alone important for my present purpose, are not the heroes of "Pendennis" and "Philip" both writers? Do we not follow their literary careers in a particularly close manner? Are we not made the confidants of their struggles? Are we not introduced familiarly to the world in which they move, the world of journalists, authors, editors, publishers? And in these books Thackeray recorded his own experiences. Of that there can be no manner of doubt. Pendennis is not only to a great extent, as Thackeray more than half acknowledges in a letter to Mrs. Brookfield, a piece of self-portraiture, but there is also very striking similarity in the circumstances and experiences of Pendennis, and of Thackeray himself. Thackeray loses money, partly by his own fault: so does Pendennis. Thackeray has chambers in the Temple, and reads for the bar: Pendennis does the same. Thackeray very soon abandons the study of the law, and devotes himself to periodical literature—writes essays, reviews, art criticism, stories, burlesques, verses: Pen-

dennis follows in his footsteps with the greatest exactitude. And Thackeray without doubt intended us to regard Pendennis as occupying the same kind of literary position that he himself had occupied in his younger days. For Pendennis is nothing if not light, brilliant, fanciful, and versatile. He never poses as the social or political philosopher. He leaves such weightier matters to his friend George Warrington.

"'I can't fly upon such a wing as yours,' he says to the latter. 'But you can on your own, my boy, which is lighter and soars higher, perhaps,' answers his friend. 'Those little scraps and verses which I have seen of yours show me, what is rare in these days, a natural gift, sir. . . . You have got the sacred flame—a little of the real poetical fire, sir, I think; and all our oil-lamps are nothing compared to that, though ever so well trimmed. You are a poet, Pen, my boy.'"

Then when Pen is, not unnaturally, over elated at this praise, Warrington bursts out upon him:—

"'Why, you young goose, . . . you don't suppose that you are a serious poet, do you, and are going to cut out Milton and Æschylus? Are you setting up to be a Pindar, you absurd little tom-tit, and fancy you have the strength and pinion which the Theban Eagles bear, sailing with supreme dominion through the azure fields of air? No, my boy, I think you can write a magazine article, and turn out a pretty copy of verses; that's what I think of you.' 'By Jove!' answers Pen; 'I'll show you that I am a better man than you think for!'"

And so he did: and so Thackeray did. As a novelist, as a prose-writer he soared immeasurably above the average magazine article. But Warrington's criticism can scarcely be bettered as a judgment upon his verse.

With Philip Thackeray has far fewer points of resemblance than with Pendennis. Philip, to begin with,

is a bear, and Thackeray, though he may have had his moods, was a gentleman of courteous manner and address. Again Philip, as a writer, seems to have been rather below than above mediocrity. He was a very ordinary foreign correspondent and hack journalist, and evidently far happier with the scissors and paste than with the pen. Thus, neither as a man nor as an author does he bear any likeness to Thackeray. But yet in the story of his life Thackeray had interwoven many of his own experiences. For Philip, having at first been rich in this world's goods, is suddenly compelled to turn to journalism for a living. He goes to Paris as the correspondent of a London newspaper. He is engaged while there to an officer's daughter. He marries on an income barely sufficient, and precarious. He takes up his dwelling in dear old professional Bloomsbury, and children are born to him, and sorrows and anxieties accumulate. All this, *mutatis mutandis*, is but a chapter in Thackeray's own life, briefly summarized.

Some little more detail may, however, seem desirable, even to the least exacting of readers. It has been told, in a previous chapter, how Thackeray and his stepfather, Major Carmichael Smyth, had invested money in a newspaper, *The National Standard and Journal of Literature, Science, Music, Theatricals, and the Fine Arts*. This journal had but a brief existence. Major Carmichael Smyth, as there is good reason to believe, stood for the portrait of Colonel Newcome, and it may be that he was, like that good officer, not only a *preux chevalier* without fear and without reproach, but also an ineffective financier. Anyhow money was dropped

over *The National Standard*.[1] Mr. Batchelor, in "Lovel the Widower," who had embarked, unsuccessfully, on a similar venture, observes :—

"I dare say I gave myself airs as editor of that confounded *Museum*, and proposed to educate the public taste, to diffuse morality and sound literature throughout the nation, and to pocket a liberal salary in return for my services. I dare say I printed my own sonnets, my own tragedy, my own verses. . . . I dare say I wrote satirical articles, in which I piqued myself on the fineness of my wit, and criticisms, got up for the nonce out of encyclopædias and biographical dictionaries; so that I would be actually astounded at my own knowledge. I dare say I made a gaby of myself to the world: pray, my good friend, hast thou never done likewise? If thou hast never been a fool, be sure thou wilt never be a wise man."

Is this passage also autobiographical? To some slight extent, perhaps, and making all due allowance for the writer's readiness to satirize himself as well as other people. But that the editor of *The National Standard* appeared to the world in the light of a "gaby" may well be doubted. He put some excellent work into the paper; and within a few months of its demise we find him, as it were enthroned, among the contributors to *Fraser's Magazine*.

Yes, there he figures as one of "the Fraserians" in Maclise's picture published with the number of the magazine for January, 1835. "And not a bad assembly

[1] According to other accounts the loss would seem rather to have occurred in connection with *The Constitutional*, and in 1836–37. There was, no doubt, loss over both papers; and Major Carmichael Smyth had certainly a large pecuniary interest in *The Constitutional*, to which Thackeray acted as Paris correspondent.

either," to quote Robert Browning, as we watch them sitting round the convivial board and listening to an after-dinner speech—"God knows what about," says the accompanying letterpress—from the lips of the editor, Dr. Maginn. Two men of genius at least, Coleridge and Carlyle, are among the company; and it includes also several men who, without being exactly men of genius, were men of mark, as Southey and Barry Cornwall, and Edward Irving, and Lockhart, and the Ettrick Shepherd, to say nothing of Theodore Hook and Count D'Orsay. There, too, among these worthies, sits Thackeray—a young Thackeray, with hair dark and abundant, and an eye-glass instead of spectacles, and a neck swathed in one of those enormous stocks which must, as one can but think, have made the Thirties a period of great personal discomfort.

On what precise grounds was he made to figure among "the Fraserians," in January, 1835? What had he written for *Regina* before that date? Bibliography answers the inquiry with a very uncertain voice. In August and September, 1832, the magazine had published, under the title of "Elizabeth Brownrigge," a somewhat ghastly burlesque of Bulwer's "Eugene Aram"; and Dr. John Brown, and Mr. Swinburne, with Mr. Shepherd following suit, seem to think it at least probable that Thackeray had tried upon this tale the 'prentice hand that was afterwards, under the influence of a very similar inspiration, to fashion forth the story of the murderess Catherine. This, however, is no more than hypothesis, and beyond its glimmer we are in almost total darkness. Even so patient an

investigator as Mr. Shepherd has not ventured to ascribe to Thackeray any other papers in the columns of *Fraser* anterior to 1835. And yet it is clear that some at least of his work must lie hidden among the anonymous and pseudonymous contributions. Else how should he be in the picture? And I think we may also conclude from his presence there—for even kindly editors are not too fond of advertising their connection with the absolutely obscure—that he had already made some little mark in the world of journalism and letters.

Not, however, as yet a very distinguished mark. That was not to come till thirteen years later. Meanwhile, in the earlier days of which I am speaking, he must probably have been recognized by his fellow-craftsmen, rather than by the general public, as a man ready, versatile, and full of ability of various kinds. He himself was clearly feeling his way, more or less assiduously. It even took him some time to discover whether he should trust for a living to his pen or to his pencil. Serious art, the art of the painter, as opposed to the art of the book illustrator and caricaturist, he had probably abandoned long ere this. In the diary of Macready, under date of the 27th of April, 1836, there is this entry: "At Garrick Club, where I dined and saw the papers. Met Thackeray, who has spent all his fortune, and is now about to settle in Paris, I believe as an artist." And at this date, though he was doubtless writing apace, he was also looking out for work as an illustrator. On the 20th of April, just a week before the entry in Macready's diary, Seymour, who was to have designed the illustrations for "Pickwick," died by

his own hand, and it must have been within the next few days that Thackeray offered to take his place. "I can remember," said Thackeray in a speech at the Academy dinner in 1858, "when Mr. Dickens was a very young man, and had commenced delighting the world with some charming humorous works in covers which were coloured light green and came out once a month, that this young man wanted an artist to illustrate his writings; and I remember walking up to his chambers in Furnival's Inn, with two or three drawings in my hand, which, strange to say, he did not find suitable." Again, "Flore et Zéphyr," published in this same year 1836, is a caricaturist's, not a writer's, book, and the illustrations to Douglas Jerrold's "Men of Character," published in 1838, are by Thackeray.

Some little doubt appears to have existed among Thackeray's biographers as to the precise date of his marriage. Trollope assigns the event to 1837, and the anonymous author of "Thackerayana" says it took place shortly after the failure of *The Constitutional*, which would still be in 1837, as the last number of the paper appeared on the 1st of July in that year. The real date, however, was the 20th of August, 1836, as is shown by an extract, to the following effect, from the "Register Book of Marriages in the House of the British Ambassador in Paris":—

"William Makepeace Thackeray of the Parish of St. John Paddington in the County of Middlesex Bachelor and Isabella Getkin Eneagh[1] Shawe of the Parish of Donerail in the County

[1] Though my extract is duly sealed and certified, there seems little doubt that these names should really be read as "Gethin"

of Cork Spinster and a Minor were married in this House with consent of her Mother Isabella G. Shawe this twentieth day of August in the year one thousand eight hundred and thirty-six. By me, M. H. Luscombe, Bishop and Chaplain. This marriage was solemnised between us W. M. Thackeray, I. G. E. Shawe. In the presence of V. Spencer, I. G. Shawe, Senior, J. W. Lemaire."

The marriage seems scarcely to have been a prudent one, according to the views prevailing in this last decade of the nineteenth century. But fifty years ago the struggle for life was not so keen, nor were the means of existence so difficult to obtain, and what we regard as wise foresight would have been condemned, in our fathers' days, as want of courage and worldliness. This is how Thackeray wrote, many years afterwards, to Mr. Synge :[1]—

"I married at your age with £400 paid by a newspaper which failed six months afterwards, and always love to hear of a young fellow testing his fortune bravely in that way. If I can see my way to help you, I will. Though my marriage was a wreck, as you know, I would do it over again, for behold Love is the crown and completion of all earthly good. A man who is afraid of his fortune never deserved one. I wish you the very best. The very best and pleasantest house I ever knew in my life had but £300 to keep it."

Nor would it be at all difficult to cull analogous passages from Thackeray's published writings, all tending to show

and "Creagh." This was pointed out by my friend, Mr. Denny Urlin, in a letter to *The Athenæum*, commenting on a letter of mine stating the right date of the marriage. Mrs. Thackeray is the daughter of Colonel Matthew Shawe, who, it is stated, had been military secretary to the Marquis of Wellesley in India.

[1] The passage is quoted by Mr. Merivale in Chapter XII., but I repeat it here as illustrating Thackeray's views on marriage.

that he was quite impenitent as regards any imprudence of which he may have been guilty, and quite prepared to urge his fellow-men to go and do likewise.

Prudent or imprudent, the marriage seems to have been a very happy one until it was practically annulled by a calamity almost more terrible than death. Thackeray took his young wife to live in Great Coram Street, near the Foundling, and manfully set himself to the task of keeping the wolf from the door. In the years from 1837 to 1842 he wrote a great deal, even if we take count only of what can be distinctly ascribed to his pen. Novelettes, stories, adaptations, reviews, miscellaneous articles, criticisms on art, foreign correspondence, ballads —nothing came to him amiss. Now he would be coming forward as one of the fiery spirits of *Fraser's Magazine*—for *Fraser* was no milksop in the Thirties and Forties—and assailing Lytton Bulwer, whom the staff of *Fraser* hated, with a rudeness which he lived to regret. Now he was writing for the *New Monthly Magazine*, or *Ainsworth's Magazine*, or reviewing for the *Times* or *Westminster Review*. Cruikshank's acquaintance he probably formed at this time, at a club called the Rationals, which used to dine at four o'clock on Saturday afternoons, at "The Wrekin," in Broad Street, Drury Lane;[1] and for Cruikshank's literary ventures, the *Comic Almanack*, *George Cruikshank's Omnibus*, he wrote, and in excellent style. In 1839 Mr. Cole, afterwards well known in connection with the Science and Art Department, is sending a sketch of his to Cobden, and recommending him for service in the

[1] "Thackeray and Cruikshank," by W. E. Church.

great Anti-Corn-Law Movement. "The artist," says Mr. Cole—and his words have a curious interest in the light of Thackeray's later fame—

> "The artist is a genius both with his pen and his pencil. His vocation is literary. He is full of humour and feeling. Hitherto he has not had occasion to think much on the subject of Corn Laws, and therefore wants the stuff to work upon. He would like to combine both writing and drawing when sufficiently primed, and then he would write and illustrate ballads, or tales, or anything. I think you would find him a most useful auxiliary."[1]

In brief he was ready for any kind of task: not too proud to do hack-work, but rather putting his pride in doing it well, and figuring, Proteus-like, in the periodical literature of the time, now as Launcelot Wagstaff, now as Michael Angelo Titmarsh, now as Samuel Titmarsh, now as Charles Yellowplush, and now as George Fitz-Boodle. The most important of the stories produced at about this date were, "The Fatal Boots," "Cox's Diary," "Catherine," "The Shabby-Genteel Story," and "The Great Hoggarty Diamond."

A peculiar and pathetic interest attaches to the last named of these stories. It "was written," as Thackeray himself has told us, "at a time when the writer was suffering under the severest personal grief and calamity" —"at a time," as he says in one of his letters, "when my heart was very soft and humble—*Ich habe auch viel geliebt.*" His married life had commenced with every prospect of happiness. Though we know very little about Mrs. Thackeray—and there really is no need why

[1] See Cole's "Fifty Years of Public Work."

we should know more—yet we know enough to be able to say that her husband was greatly attached to her. Writing to Mrs. Brookfield, while "Vanity Fair" was in progress, he says, "You know you are only a piece of Amelia, my mother is another half, my poor little wife *y est pour beaucoup.*" And again, on another occasion, when he is taking his daughters up the Rhine, and being very happy in their enjoyment, he writes to the same correspondent, "I sat with the children, and talked with them about their mother last night. It is my pleasure to tell them how humble-minded their mother was." And in this connection there is a pathos in the story which tells how an old groom in Trollope's stables once said to Thackeray: "I hear you have written a book upon Ireland, and are always making fun of the Irish; you don't like us." "God help me!" said Thackeray, turning his head away as his eyes filled with tears, "all that I have loved best in the world is Irish." Did not Isabella Shawe come from "the parish of Donerail, in the County of Cork"? "I was as happy as the day was long with her," he told his cousin Mr. Bedingfield.

So, for a time Love was lord of all in the home in Great Coram Street. A daughter was born—Anne Isabella—destined thereafter, as the authoress of "The Story of Elizabeth," and "The Village on the Cliff," to add new lustre even to such a name as Thackeray. Then came a second daughter, bringing sorrow with her, for she died in infancy. Then appeared a third daughter, Harriet Marion, who was to marry Mr. Leslie Stephen, and now too has passed into the Silent Land. After the birth of this third child Mrs. Thackeray's

health failed. She was afflicted with some mental disease, not apparently, even at first, violent in its character, but totally unfitting her for her duties as a wife and mother. It became imperative that she should be placed under proper care,[1] and the home be practically broken up.

At what precise date this happened is not very clear. Thackeray, in a letter to Mrs. Brookfield, says :—

"As I am waiting to see Mrs. Buller, I find an old review with an advertisement in it, containing a great part of an article I wrote about Fielding in 1840, in *The Times*. . . . My wife was just sickening at that moment; I wrote it at Margate, where I had taken her, and used to walk out three miles to a little bowling green, and write there in an arbour—coming home and wondering what was the melancholy oppressing the poor little woman. *The Times* gave me five guineas for the article. I recollect I thought it rather shabby pay, and twelve days after it appeared in the paper my poor little wife's malady showed itself. . . . God help us what a deal of cares, and pleasures, and struggles, and happiness I have had since that day in the little sunshiny arbour, where, with scarcely any money in my pocket and two little children (Minnie was a baby two months old), I was writing this notice about Fielding. Grief, Love, Fame, if you like: I have had no little of all since then. (I don't mean to take the fame for more than its worth, or brag about it with any peculiar elation.)."

From this extract, and the preface to "The Great Hoggarty Diamond," it is clear that Thackeray set down the year 1840

[1] She is described to me, by one who saw her long, long years after this, as an old lady, very quiet and gentle, and taking a peculiar pleasure in children—she used to give dolls to my informant's sister—but liable to strange agitation if her husband's name was mentioned.

as that in which his wife's illness declared itself; and we have evidence that he was in Paris, with his children, in the winter of 1840 and spring of 1841, writing "The Second Funeral of Napoleon,"[1] and "The Chronicle of the Drum"—for his daughter, Mrs. Ritchie, tells us as much, adding: "I can just remember the snow upon the ground, and a room opening upon a garden in the *Champs Elysées*, where he used to write." Sir F. Pollock, however, in his "Personal Remembrances," says he recollects "dining with Thackeray at the modest abode occupied by him in Great Coram Street —or as we usually called it Great Jorum Street"—early in 1842, and that Thackeray's wife was present. But how this can have been is not quite clear. The evidence seems to point rather to the conclusion that the separation took place in 1840, that Thackeray placed his two little daughters under his mother's care in Paris in that same year, and that though he retained the house in Great Coram Street for some time longer,[2] he only occupied it fitfully, and that bachelorwise.

"I can't live without the tenderness of some woman," says Thackeray in the correspondence from which several passages have already been quoted; "and expect when I am sixty I shall be marrying a girl of eleven or twelve, innocent, barley-sugar-loving, in a pinafore."

[1] "Have you read Thackeray's little book, 'The Second Funeral of Napoleon'? If not, pray do, and buy it, and ask others to buy it: as each copy sold puts 7½d. in T.'s pocket: which is not very heavy just now, I take it."—Fitzgerald's Letters, February 18, 1841.

[2] He appears as the occupant in the Directory for 1842.

This was the man who, before he was thirty, had to face a lifelong separation from the wife he loved, and a long separation from his children. People afterwards called him cynical because he saw so clearly the evil in things good as well as the good in things evil. But the wonder rather is that he did not come out of such an ordeal soured, dispirited, disenchanted with life itself —doubting if it be indeed worth living—and preaching to others revolt and despair. This effect his trial never had. It left him with a heart saddened indeed, but full of courage, and full especially of a great tenderness for all human sorrow and suffering.

CHAPTER VIII.

(By Frank T. Marzials.)

SO Thackeray's home was broken up—he was still, it should be remembered, under thirty—and thenceforward, for several years to come, he lived a Bohemian kind of life: a life of clubs, and to some extent of taverns, a life in which many evenings were spent at the Cyder-cellars and Evans's, and other places of similar resort—the life in short—I am using the expression with no suggestion of evil—of a man about town. Here is his own inimitable description, published many years afterwards, of the Bohemia in which he had then dwelt:—"A pleasant land, not fenced with drab stucco like Tyburnia or Belgravia; not guarded by a huge standing army of footmen; not echoing with noble chariots; not replete with polite chintz drawing-rooms and neat tea-tables; a land over which hangs an endless fog occasioned by much tobacco; a land of chambers, billiard rooms, supper rooms, oysters; a land of song; a land where soda-water flows freely in the morning; a land of tin dish-covers from taverns and frothing porter; a land of lotus-eating (with

lots of cayenne pepper); of pulls on the river, of delicious reading of novels, magazines, and saunterings in many studios: a land where men call each other by their Christian names; where most are poor, where almost all are young, and where, if a few oldsters enter, it is because they have preserved more tenderly and carefully than others their youthful spirits, and the delightful capacity to be idle. I have lost my way to Bohemia now, but it is certain that Prague is the most picturesque city in the world."

At the same time, though an inhabitant of "Prague," Thackeray was working uncommonly hard, and with no particular reward either in praise or pelf. "The Great Hoggarty Diamond" had been offered to *Blackwood*, and rejected, before it finally found a place in *Fraser's Magazine;* and though some few good judges greeted it with admiration, and notably John Sterling, who asked, "what is there better in Goldsmith or Fielding"? yet the public cast it carelessly aside, and the editor even made the unpleasant suggestion that it should be curtailed. Nevertheless Thackeray held on undaunted, and with a courage all the more praiseworthy that he was very sensitive, and keenly affected by all adverse influences. He continued to contribute to *Fraser's Magazine*, not indeed abandoning his connection with that periodical till January, 1847,[1] on the very eve of the publication of the first number of "Vanity Fair." He threw himself with zest into the

[1] There was one later contribution, the satirical "Mr. Thackeray in the United States," published in *Fraser's Magazine* for January, 1853.

service of *Punch*, then—in 1842—entering upon the second year of its existence. And in June of that same year, being apparently desirous of breaking new ground, and seeing what could be made of Ireland as a subject for a book, he betook himself to Dublin.

What he saw during his tour of the Emerald Isle will be found recorded in the "Irish Sketch Book." From Dublin he went southward to Waterford and Cork, thence westward, by the lovely Glengarriff route to lovely Killarney—thence again to Limerick and Galway and Connemara—Clew Bay, as well it might, exciting his enthusiastic admiration—and thence back to Dublin, to Wicklow, to Belfast, to the Giant's Causeway—and so finally to Dublin once more. About all that he saw and heard during this pretty comprehensive peregrination he has much to say, and as a picture of Ireland in 1842, of the Ireland that could be seen in a few weeks' tour by a keen-sighted observer, the "Irish Sketch Book" has, and will always retain, distinct historical value. Then, too, the book is Thackeray's, and any book of Thackeray's is worth reading.[1]

But in connection with this Irish tour we get what, for my present biographical purpose, is more interesting than reflections on Ireland, and that is a near view of Thackeray himself, as he appeared in the year 1842,

[1] The compiler of the Bibliography appended to "Sultan Stork"—whom I take to be Mr. Shepherd—says that Thackeray wrote a preface for the second edition of the "Irish Sketch Book," advocating the disestablishment of the Irish Church, and the Repeal of the Union. This preface, however, if it really exists, has never been published.

and before he became famous. Lever, the great Lever, most typical of Irish novelists and good fellows, and already well known as the author of "Charles O'Malley" and "Harry Lorrequer," was then living near Dublin, and editing *The Dublin University Magazine*. Thackeray brought over a letter of introduction to Lever. An invitation to dinner followed; and, fortunately, among the guests was a certain Major D——, who has written an account of what took place on the occasion. Now Major D——, as he confesses, had never heard of Thackeray before, and knew no more of him than what he had been told by Lever; and Lever's own knowledge seems scarcely to have gone very much beyond what was to be learnt from a letter of introduction. This would naturally say that Thackeray was a humourist, and accordingly those assembled felt some little surprise, and apparently disappointment, that instead of adopting a jocular tone, "his manner was at first reserved, earnest, and quiet; . . . what was most observable seemed to be that he was, himself, carefully observing, and desirous of not being drawn out, at least not prematurely."

This reserve, however, gave way under the genial influences of the table:—

"As dinner proceeded, and after the ladies had retired, the two protagonists began to skirmish, endeavouring to draw each other out. Neither knew much of the other, beyond what could be gleaned from their published works. Thackeray had as yet written only under assumed names or anonymously; it was not so easy to get at him through his writings: Lever on the contrary had put his name to one or two works of so marked a character, that it seemed

quite natural to connect his own individuality with that of some of his earlier heroes, who were, as we know, somewhat flighty and eccentric. The conversation had been led by Lever on the subject of the battle of Waterloo. . . . Thackeray soon joined in; he did not pretend to know anything about the great battle, but he evidently wished to spur on Lever to identify himself with Charles O'Malley. . . . I have already alluded to Thackeray's ideas, imputing want of truthfulness to the Irish; he seemed always to wish to betray every Irishman he met into boasting in some shape or on some subject; he often reminded me of the *agents provocateurs* of the Continental police in this respect. . . . Lever . . . quickly perceiving his antagonist's game . . . met his feints with very quiet but perfectly efficacious parries. It was highly interesting, and not a little amusing, to observe how these two men played each a part, seemingly belonging to the other; Thackeray assuming what he judged to be a style of conversation suitable for Lever, while the latter responded in the sarcastic and sceptical tone proper to an English tourist in Ireland."

A graceful piece of praise, however, brought about a pleasanter state of feeling. Thackeray

"paid Lever the very handsome compliment of saying that he would rather have written Lorrequer's English version of the Student Song, 'The Pope he leads a happy life,' &c., than anything he had himself done in literature. Lever . . . was very much pleased, and also finally convinced that Thackeray really meant what he said. I suspect that the first stone of the foundation of their future friendship was thus laid; certainly from that moment they became more cordial to each other, and the conversation ran smoother and with less restraint than it had previously done. Passing on to French authors, full justice was done to the celebrities of the day, Dumas, Alphonse Karr, Balzac, George Sand, &c. Thackeray criticized the French theatre very sharply, and came out with a strong bit of humorous representation, which convulsed us with laughter. It had reference to some drama, or opera, I forget what, in which the principal male character comes on the stage with a pirouette, and waving his hand in a majestic manner

to a chorus, representing Jews in exile in Babylon, says, 'Chantez nous une chanson de Jérusalem.' Thackeray rose from his seat and did the thing, pirouette and all, most inimitably: by the way, he was fond of exhibiting his French pronunciation, also of caricaturing very cleverly that of his own countrymen, the English. Siborne and I willingly accepted the part of *témoins* to the brilliant conversational encounter that ensued, in which the two principals exerted themselves to their utmost to please each other. How much both delighted and excelled in conversation must be known to many of their friends, but perhaps neither ever showed to greater advantage than when contrasted with the other, when so many differences of nationality, early association, and habit of thought were brought into vivid relief. Thackeray's conversation flowed more easily on the whole, like the deeper current of a river meandering through a cultivated country, and only occasionally quickening its pace and gathering force to dash over some well-selected point; Lever's, on the contrary, resembled a mountain torrent, leaping over rocks and precipices from pool to pool, in clouds of sparkling spray."[1]

Does not this extract seem to bring us near to the Thackeray of 1842? But not, I think to the Thackeray, even of 1842, in his best and kindliest aspect. Major D—— seems to have seen a good deal of him during his stay in Dublin—took him to witness a review, accompanied him to Maynooth, compared sketches—and though evidently liking and admiring the brilliant English visitor, was also somewhat disagreeably impressed by a certain suspiciousness and occasional censoriousness and want of temper. But if there was ever any element of acidity in Thackeray's relations with Major D——, there was none certainly, at least after the beginning of their first interview, in his relations with Lever. In

[1] This extract is from the very interesting "Reminiscences" of a Major D——, in Dr. Fitzpatrick's "Life of Charles Lever."

Lever's house he was only kindly and genial, thoroughly laying himself out to please and to be pleased. That he should be a favourite with the children was a matter of course. The smaller folk he always loved. "He had a particular delight in boys, and an excellent way with them," says Dickens, adding, "I remember his once asking me, with fantastic gravity, when he had been to Eton, where my eldest boy then was, whether I felt as he did in regard of never seeing a boy without wanting instantly to give him a sovereign." There is again the prettiest little glimpse of him at Rome, during the Christmastide of 1854, drawing the pictures in the "Rose and the Ring" for the amusement of a group of expatriated children, and carrying the sketches, as he drew them, to a sick maiden who, "starting up eagerly, and tossing back her thick hair," would stretch out her hot hand for the pages.[1]

So Lever's children, as was natural, took to him; and with Lever himself he conferred in friendliest fashion—discussing many things, and offering every "assistance, pecuniary or otherwise," if Lever would consent—a step which Thackeray strongly urged—to leave Dublin, and carry his literary wares to the greater market of London. In describing these conferences afterwards to a friend, "Lever pronounced Thackeray to be the most good-natured man alive," but added—and the remark throws a curious light on contemporary opinion—"that help from him would be worse than no help at all. . . . He is like a man struggling to keep his head over water, and who offers to teach his friend to swim." Thackeray, according

[1] Mrs. Ritchie's preface to "The Orphan of Pimlico."

to Lever, was a man who "would write for anything, and about anything, and had so lost himself that his status in London was not good." Kind, generous Thackeray, what a characteristic trait is that offer of assistance! However poor he might be, and at this time he was very far from rich, he still longed to help a friend. The world called him a cynic, and some of his utterances no doubt gave colour to the accusation, but Lever's "most good-natured man alive"—a description afterwards echoed in almost the same words by Anthony Trollope—is nearer to the truth.

Thackeray was back in England early in 1843, for the dedication of the "Irish Sketch Book," to "Dr. Charles Lever," is dated "London, April 27th" in that year; and he at once threw himself into his old work with almost more than the old zest. If Lever had warned him against "writing for anything and about anything," the warning was clearly thrown away. He writes more than ever for *Fraser's Magazine*. He furnishes art criticism, at the rate of a guinea a column, for an illustrated paper—*The Pictorial Times*—which the enterprising Mr. Henry Vizetelly had just started. He supplies an occasional story to *Colburn's New Monthly Magazine*, an occasional review to *The Morning Chronicle*.[1] He continues his contributions to *Punch*. No wonder that Edward Fitzgerald, writing on the 24th of May, 1844, should announce: Thackeray "is in full vigour, play and pay, in London, writing in a dozen reviews and

[1] Charles Mackay says, I know not how truly, that Thackeray tried to obtain the post of sub-editor of the *Morning Chronicle*, but that he, Charles Mackay, was appointed.

a score of newspapers: and while health lasts he sails before the wind."

And within a very short time he sails before the wind in more literal fashion. On the 20th of August he is dining at a club, un-named, with two friends, a "Mr. William" and a "Mr. James," the latter of whom is just about to start on an excursion to the Mediterranean. Why should not Thackeray go too?

"The idea of beholding these famous places—Malta, Athens, Smyrna, Constantinople, Jerusalem, Cairo"—inflamed his mind, "and the charms of such a journey were eloquently impressed upon him by Mr. James. 'Come,' said that kind and hospitable gentleman, 'and make one of my family party; in all your life you will never probably have a chance again to see so much in so short a time. Consider—it is as easy as a journey to Paris or to Baden.' Mr. Titmarsh considered all these things; but also the difficulties of the situation: he had but six-and-thirty hours to get ready for so portentous a journey—he had engagements at home—finally, could he afford it? In spite of these objections, however, with every glass of claret the enthusiasm somehow rose, and the difficulties vanished. And when Mr. James, to crown all, said he had no doubt that his friends, the Directors of the Peninsular and Oriental Company, would make Mr. Titmarsh the present of a berth for the voyage, all objections ceased on his part. . . . And on the 22nd of August the *Lady Mary Wood* was sailing from Southampton with the 'subject of the present memoir,' quite astonished to find himself one of the passengers on board."

The Eastern question is perennial; and in 1840, as will be remembered, it had reached one of its acute phases, and almost led to a rupture between England and France. A considerable interest in things Eastern was the result, lasting on into the next few years. Those were the days when Mr. Kinglake wrote "Eöthen"—

wrote it "with the savage energy of a dyspeptic Englishman," as a harsh critic remarked—and when Eliot Warburton wrote "The Crescent and the Cross." That Thackeray too went Eastward Ho! is not, therefore, to be wondered at, nor that he should have recorded his two-months' experiences in a book. And an excellent little book "From Cornhill to Grand Cairo" is, and far superior in interest and pleasurableness to the "Irish Sketch Book." Thackeray was in happy mood when he went on this tour, happy in his companions, happy in the sights he saw. He describes these latter with a corresponding felicity, and moralizes throughout in his best vein. Nor need it be said that the humourist that was in Thackeray never obtrudes his motley out of season, or shakes his cap and bells unduly and in hallowed places. "Titmarsh at Jerusalem will certainly be an era in Christianity," wrote Fitzgerald on the 10th of October, while his friend was away. Titmarsh's visit marked no such era. He behaved with all reverence in the Holy Places, feeling and expressing a sense of awe. There be humourists and humourists, indeed; and this humourist, though ready enough to laugh at pretentiousness and overblown sentiment, knew when his laughter ought to be hushed.

Thackeray's tour in the East did not last much more than two months, for he was back at Malta by the 27th of October, and then, if we may believe Mr. Samuel Bevan,[1] he took Rome on his way homewards :—

[1] "Sand and Canvas." I have some doubt, however, notwithstanding the "on his way from Cairo," whether the visit to Rome here spoken of belongs to this winter of 1844. It must, however,

"Of the great men who visited Rome during this winter M. A. Titmarsh was among the most popular. Himself an artist, he dropped among us on his way from Cairo, no one knowing when he came, or when he went away. Installed in a quiet bedroom at Franz's, on the Condotti, he appeared to amuse himself, like Asmodeus, with peering into the studios of his countrymen, and while he rummaged over their dusty portfolios, or critically scanned the pictures on the wall, would unconsciously read their secret thoughts, as it were the arcana of their pockets, without allowing them for a moment to imagine that he intended aught save a friendly visit. Many, however, were the poor devils who managed to push through the winter on the strength of the timely fillip administered by Titmarsh."

Thackeray, after this, was back in London, still in 1844, as I gather, and working apace. We do not, however, catch any glimpse of him again, except in his writings, until the 12th of June following, when there occurs this graphic and amusing passage in Fitzgerald's correspondence :—

"If you want to know something of the exhibitions . . . read *Fraser's Magazine* for this month ; there Thackeray has a paper on the matter full of fun. I met Stone in the street the other day ; he took me by the button, and told me, with perfect sincerity and with increasing warmth, how, though he loved old Thackeray, yet these yearly outpourings of his "—*i.e.*, his annual reviews of the pictures in the various exhibitions—"had sorely tried him. . . . Stone worked himself up to such a pitch under the pressure of forced calmness, that he at last said Thackeray would get himself horsewhipped one day by one of these infuriated Apelleses. . . . In the meanwhile old Thackeray laughs at all this, and goes on in his own way, writing hard for half a dozen reviews and newspapers all the morning ;

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have occurred shortly after 1844, if not in 1844, for "Sand and Canvas" was published in 1849 ; and anyhow the glimpse of Thackeray is a pleasant one.

dining, drinking, and talking of a night; managing to preserve a fresh colour and perpetual flow of spirits under a wear-and-tear of thinking and feeding that would have knocked up any other man I know two years ago at least."

But all this time I have been keeping in the background Thackeray's connection with *Punch*. Punch, as we know, came into this world a hump-backed, and if the truth must be told, at first somewhat ricketty little creature, on the 17th of July, 1841. But though his back never grew straight, he soon waxed strong and gave promise of longevity. Leech helped to foster him from an early date (his first caricature appeared on the 7th of August), and Thackeray, Leech's old schoolfellow at the Charterhouse, soon after came to help to nurse the little crazy cripple into health. "It was a good day for himself, the journal, and the world," said Shirley Brooks, one of the succession of *Punch's* editors, when "Thackeray found *Punch*." At first I should gather that he had doubts as to the advisability of joining in the new and, so far, not very promising venture; and on the 22nd of May, 1842, we find Fitzgerald uttering a warning note, and writing to a common friend, "Tell Thackeray not to go into *Punch* yet." However, his hesitation must soon have been overcome. Several of the contributors he certainly knew. Leech was his old schoolfellow. With Douglas Jerrold he had foregathered, in Paris, at least as far back as the winter of 1835. These would do all to enlist the services of so promising a recruit. And then what an opening did a young comic journal offer to a humorist and wit conscious of such superb versatile

original power! Nor was ever periodical better served. During ten years he poured into its pages ballads, songs, burlesques; lectures on English history; stories; short pungent notes on the events of the day; notes of travel; papers humorous, witty, wise, pathetic; parodies absolutely incomparable of the works of other novelists. Now he was "*Punch's* Commissioner," now "Our fat Contributor" in the East, now "Our stout Commissioner" pretty well everywhere, now addressing the world as "Policeman X"; now as Jeames, and in Jeames' jargon, telling the story of that aspiring flunkey's lucky speculations and ultimate downfall during the year of the railway mania; and now in his own person—"as one of themselves" indeed he called it—writing of "the Snobs of England."

Between the Snob papers and "Vanity Fair" there is a kind of overlapping, for the last of the former appeared in *Punch* on the 27th of February, 1847, and the first number of "Vanity Fair" had been published at the commencement of the previous month. And looking back from this point—which is so marked and important in Thackeray's career—it is scarcely possible to avoid a kind of wonder at the tardiness with which success smiled upon him. How was it, one is tempted to ask, that a writer who had done such admirable work should have had to wait for the publication of "Vanity Fair" before he was recognized as a master? Of the fact itself there can be no question at all. "I can suit the magazines," he wrote to his cousin, Mr. Bedingfield, "but I can't hit the public—be hanged to them." "The Great Hoggarty Diamond" had

gone begging to *Blackwood* before it was finally accepted by *Fraser*, and the editor of *Fraser* wished it to be curtailed. Later, in 1845, there is an incident perhaps even more significant. Macvey Napier was, at that date, the editor of *The Edinburgh Review*. As such it would be part of his business to keep himself acquainted with the names of any men of note in literature. Yet so little had he ever heard of Thackeray, that he could, on the 12th of April, write to Hayward in the following terms :—

"Will you tell me, confidentially of course, whether you know anything of a Mr. Thackeray, about whom Longman has written me, thinking he would be a good hand for light articles? He says (Longman) that this Mr. Thackeray is one of the best writers in *Punch*. One requires to be very much on one's guard in engaging with mere strangers. In a journal like the *Edinbro' it is always of importance to keep up in respect of names*." [1]

Nay, when Thackeray had been admitted—probably on the recommendation of Hayward, who afterwards did him an even better turn—to the charmed circle of the *Edinburgh* reviewers, and had written his article, the editor treated it with very scant consideration. He evidently used the amputating knife unsparingly, as the following note of Thackeray, dated October 16, 1845, will show :—

"I have just received, and acknowledge with many thanks, your bankers' bill. From them or from you I shall always be delighted to receive communications of this nature. From your liberal payment I can't but conclude that you reward me not only for labouring, but for being mutilated in your service. I assure you I suffered cruelly by the amputation which you were obliged to inflict upon my

[1] "A Selection from the Correspondence of Abraham Hayward, Q.C."

poor dear paper. I mourn still—as what father can help doing for his children?—for several lovely jokes and promising *facetiæ*, which were born and might have lived but for your scissors urged by ruthless necessity. I trust, however, there are many more which the future may bring forth, and which will meet with more favour in your eyes. . . . O, to think of my pet passages gone for ever!" [1]

This, for all its grace, is not the letter of a man who feels he can take a high hand with an editor. Think of Macaulay accepting such treatment, and in such a spirit! And later still, as if to show that the Fates were determined to be adverse, even to the very last, "Vanity Fair" itself, "Vanity Fair," one of the unquestioned masterpieces of English literature, was rejected by *Colburn's Magazine.*

And yet, as one can but repeat, Thackeray had done admirable work before 1847. His literary criticism, hack-writing though it may have been, was much of it excellent.[2] Take his review of Carlyle's French Revolution in *The Times* of the 3rd of August, 1837. He seizes on the chief beauty of the book—its superb qualities of graphic presentation, its living force, its wonderful lucidity in the midst of seeming disorder—and dwells on these. Carlyle himself was, naturally, only half pleased. Prophets do not like to be praised for the beauty of their style. His rather grudging remark on the review was: "The critic is one Thackeray, a half-

[1] "Selections from the Correspondence of the late Macvey Napier."

[2] Few authors have been subjected to such an ordeal as Thackeray, whose every known scrap of ephemeral writing has been exhumed and published; and, it may be added, very few writers could have borne such an ordeal so well.

monstrous Cornish giant, kind of painter, Cambridge man and Paris newspaper correspondent, who is now writing for his life in London. . . . His article is rather like him, and I suppose calculated to do the book good." But to those, and they are many, who go any length in admiring Carlyle the writer, but refuse to bow the knee to Carlyle the prophet, Thackeray's judgment will seem both right and final.[1]

Again, his art-criticism, without being "epoch-making" like the art-criticism of Winckelmann, or Lessing, or Mr. Ruskin, or even of Diderot, was of very good quality, and, though only meant to serve an ephemeral purpose, has some permanent value. Setting aside the question of literary style—and the excellence in that respect of any work of Thackeray's may be assumed—it shows knowledge, insight, discrimination, and a fearless honesty. Nor have its judgments been reversed, so far as the main positions are concerned, by the later judgments of yesterday and to-day. Mulready, whom he so admired, is still regarded as a sound and excellent painter; Maclise as a draughtsman, though no colourist; Etty as a colourist, though not a strong draughtsman; Landseer as an artist of great capabilities, who too often

[1] An examination of Thackeray's papers on French literature would require far more space than I have at command. They are curiously English in tone considering how much he had lived in Paris, and how fond he was of the incomparable City. De Quincey long ago complained that criticism was becoming too cosmopolitan, and that English critics, when judging a French book, reflected too often the judgment of Paris, instead of throwing on the subject a new light of their own. Thackeray was certainly open to no such charge.

squandered his gift in obedience to the dictates of fashion; Turner as a mighty and bewildering genius whose sublimity sometimes overshot itself. And when, writing of a humourist in black and white, Thackeray had to deal with some congenial theme like the art of Cruikshank, his criticism took an inexpressible charm and grace. In his article on Cruikshank, as afterwards in a kindred article on Leech, he is at his very happiest.

Then again, in addition to literary and art criticism, and a considerable number of miscellaneous papers, Thackeray had, before 1847, produced several stories which, as we look on them now at least, seem to give promise of his future greatness. There is great pathos in "The Great Hoggarty Diamond." There is humour and to spare in "Cox's Diary" and "The Fatal Boots." "Catherine" is extremely clever in its grim way. The series of "Men's Wives" contains some admirable touches.

Perhaps, however, on the whole, if Thackeray had produced nothing beyond the critiques and stories just referred to, there would not be so much room for wonder that he had not made a conspicuous mark in literature before the publication of "Vanity Fair." All this work, good as it was, was not so strikingly good as to compel the attention of a careless world. But what shall we say of "Barry Lyndon" and the Snob papers? Here at least we have work of supreme quality, that could not be beaten. "Barry Lyndon," the auto-biography of the Irish adventurer, gambler, and scoundrel, is a masterpiece. It is a worthy precursor of "Esmond" in the difficult field of the historical

novel. The hero is a scamp of the last century, not of ours. The world in which he moves is a world of long ago, a world as yet unshrivelled in the fire of the French Revolution. And it is a real world. We never feel doubt or hesitation about that. The characters, adventures, surroundings, all produce on us the impression of life. In the telling of the story, too, what witchery of style. How eloquent, for instance, the passage in which Barry Lyndon defends gambling—how admirable the long episode of the ill-fated love of the Princess Olivia, and of her terrible end!

"Barry Lyndon" appeared in *Fraser* during the greater part of 1844, and one may legitimately wonder that the world did not then discover that a great novelist was writing for its amusement and edification. And perhaps an even greater work was to follow. On the 28th of February, 1846, appeared in *Punch* the first of the Snob papers.

Of these papers what shall one say? Thackeray has been accused of seeing snobbery everywhere and overmuch.

> "Thackeray," says Trollope, "tells us that he was born to hunt out snobs as certain dogs are trained to find out truffles. But we can imagine that a dog, very energetic at producing truffles, and not finding them as plentiful as his heart desired, might occasionally produce roots which were not genuine—might be carried on in his energies till to his senses every fungus root became a truffle. I think that there has been something of this with our author's snob-hunting—and that his zeal was at last greater than his discrimination."

Possibly so; and Thackeray, as we know, came to

regard this book rather with disfavour. And yet, in their main positions, the Snob papers are sound enough. Pretence, meanness, vulgarity, the desire to thrust oneself unduly forward into the society of persons of rank, or wealth, or influence, or, as one may add, exceptional mental gifts—all these are the most legitimate subjects for satire. The satirist is not the philosopher, and is not concerned—especially in writing for *Punch*—to inquire how far England's snobbishness may be only the shadow of the restlessness and energy, the desire for personal advancement, which have made her great. It is enough for him that the fault should be there. His mission is to cover it with ridicule, and at the same time to amuse. And if any one fails to be amused by "The Book of Snobs," he must be singularly constituted. The wit and humour displayed are inimitable. There is a circumstantiality in the fun, a power of illustrating by concrete example, not to be surpassed. Take for example the following apologue, intended, in the author's words, to illustrate the truth "that there are many things in society which you are bound to take down, and . . . with a smiling face."

"I am naturally averse to egotism, and hate self-laudation consumedly: but I can't help relating here a circumstance illustrative of the point in question, in which I must think I acted with considerable prudence.

"Being at Constantinople a few years since—(on a delicate mission) the Russians were playing a double game, between ourselves, and it became necessary on our part to employ an *extra negotiator*—Leckerbiss Pasha, of Roumelia, then chief Galeongee of the Porte, gave a diplomatic banquet at his summer palace of Bujukdere. I was on the left of the Galeongee, and the Russian

agent, Count de Didloff, on his dexter side. Didloff is a dandy who would 'die of a rose in aromatic pain': he had tried to have me assassinated three times in the course of the negotiation; but of course we were friends in public, and saluted each other in the most cordial and charming manner.

"The Galeongee is—or was, alas! for a bowstring has done for him—a staunch supporter of the old school of Turkish politics. We dined with our fingers, and had flaps of bread for plates; the only innovation he admitted was the use of European liquors, in which he indulged with great gusto. He was an enormous eater. Amongst the dishes a very large one was placed before him of a lamb dressed in its wool, stuffed with prunes, garlic, assafœtida, capsicums, and other condiments, the most abominable mixture that ever mortal smelt or tasted. The Galeongee ate of this hugely; and pursuing the Eastern fashion, insisted on helping his friends right and left, and when he came to a particularly spicy morsel, would push it with his own hands into his guests' very mouths.

"I never shall forget the look of poor Didloff when his Excellency, rolling up a large quantity of this into a ball, and exclaiming, 'Buk, buk' (it is very good), administered the horrible bolus to Didloff. The Russian's eyes rolled dreadfully as he received it: he swallowed it with a grimace that I thought must precede a convulsion, and seizing a bottle next him, which he thought was Sauterne, but which turned out to be French brandy, he drank off nearly a pint before he knew his error. It finished him: he was carried away from the dining-room almost dead, and laid out to cool in a summer-house on the Bosphorus.

"When it came to my turn, I took the condiment with a smile, said 'Bismillah,' licked my lips with easy gratification, and, when the next dish was served, made up a ball myself so dexterously, and popped it down the old Galeongee's mouth with so much grace, that his heart was won. Russia was put out of court at once, *and the treaty of* Kabobanople *was signed.* As for Didloff, all was over with *him:* he was recalled to St. Petersburg, and Sir Roderick Murchison saw him, under the No. 3967, working in the Ural mines."

Defoe himself never achieved greater verisimilitude.

What an air of truth in the whole story, what a profusion of detail—extending even to poor Didloff's ultimate fate—and what an admirable style, clear, bright, full of effect, and yet effect obtained without the slightest affectation of language, and by the most legitimate means!

In short, don't read "The Book of Snobs" with too keen an eye to its philosophy—though even that is scarcely calculated to do any one harm. Read it rather with a view to the wealth of illustration, the fun, the satire, the perfection of the style. Read it for such descriptions as that of the dinner given by the briefless barrister to old Goldmore, the wealthy city director, or the visit to the Pontos at their country house. Read it to enjoy speeches like the following, which the writer puts into the mouth of Captain Spitfire, R.N., one of the political club snobs :—

"Why wasn't the Princess Scragamoffsky at Lady Palmerston's party, Minns? Because *she can't show*—and why can't she show? Shall I tell you, Minns, why she can't show? The Princess Scragamoffsky's back is flayed alive, Minns—I tell you it's raw, sir! On Tuesday last, at twelve o'clock, three drummers of the Preobajinski regiment arrived at Ashburnham House, and at half-past twelve, in the yellow drawing-room at the Russian Embassy, before the ambassadress and four ladies'-maids, the Greek Papa, and the Secretary of Embassy, Madame de Scragamoffsky received thirteen dozen. She was knouted, sir, knouted in the midst of England—in Berkeley Square—for having said that the Grand Duchess Olga's hair was red. And now, sir, will you tell me Lord Palmerston ought to continue minister?"

No wonder that Minns ejaculates, "Good Ged!" and "follows Spitfire about, and thinks him the greatest and wisest of human beings."

CHAPTER IX.

(By Frank T. Marzials.)

THE first monthly part of "Vanity Fair" was published in January, 1847. Thackeray had not previously issued any novel in this form, or indeed in separate form at all—his previous stories having appeared in magazines; and he felt that life was slipping away, and that, with his new venture, it was time to make some serious bid for fame and fortune. This is clearly expressed in a letter written on the 2nd of the month, to his friend Aytoun:—

"I think I have never had any ambition hitherto, or cared what the world thought my work, good or bad; but now the truth forces itself upon me, if the world will once take to admiring Titmarsh all his guineas will be multiplied by ten. Guineas are good. I have got children, only ten years more to the fore say, &c.; now is the time, my lad, to make your A when the sun at length has begun to shine. Well, I think if I can make a push at the present minute—if my friends will shout, Titmarsh for ever! hurrah for, &c., &c.—I may go up with a run to a pretty fair place in my trade, and be allowed to appear before the public among the first fiddles. But my tunes must be heard in the streets, and organs must grind them. Ha! now do you read me?

"Why don't *Blackwood* give me an article? Because he refused the best story I ever wrote?" ("The Great Hoggarty Diamond.") "Colburn refused the present 'Novel without a Hero,' and if any man at Blackwood's or Colburn's, and if any man since—fiddle-de-dee. Upon my word and honour I never said so much about myself before; but I know this, if I had the command of Blackwood, and a humouristical person like Titmarsh should come up, and labour hard and honestly (please God) for ten years, I would give him a hand. Now try, like a man, revolving these things in your soul, and see if you can't help me. . . . And if I can but save a little money, by the Lord I'll try and keep it.

"Some day, when less selfish, I will write to you about other matters than the present ego. . . . I have my children with me, and am mighty happy in that paternal character—preside over legs of mutton comfortably—go to church at early morning and like it—pay rates and taxes, &c., &c. Between this line and the above a man has brought me *The Times* on the 'Battle of Life.' 'Appy Dickens! But I love Pickwick and Crummles too much to abuse this great man. *Aliquando bonus.* And you, young man, coming up in the world full of fight, take counsel from a venerable and peaceful gladiator who has stripped for many battles. Gad, sir, this caution is a very good sign. Do you remember how complimentary Scott and Goethe were? I like the patriarchal air of some people."

Thackeray, however, a few days after preferring his request to Aytoun, evidently came to the conclusion that it savoured too much of "log-rolling," for on the 13th of January, 1847, he writes:—

"I have been thinking of the other matter on which I unbosomed myself to you, and withdraw my former letter. Puffs are good, and (so is) the testimony of good men; but I don't think these will make a success for a man, and he ought to stand as the public chooses to put him. I will try, please God, to do my best, and the money will come, perhaps, some day! Meanwhile a man so lucky as myself has no reason to complain. So let all puffing alone, though,

as you know, I am glad if I can have, and deserve, your private good opinion. The women like 'Vanity Fair,' I find, very much, and the publishers are quite in good spirits regarding that venture.

"This is all I have to say—in the solitude of midnight—with a quiet cigar, and the weakest gin-and-water in the world, ruminating over a child's ball, from which I have just come, having gone as chaperon to my little girls. One of them had her hair plaited in two tails, the other had ringlets and the most fascinating bows of blue ribbon. It was very merry, and likewise sentimental. We went in a fly, quite genteel, and law! what a comfort it was when it was over! Adyou." [1]

How natural it all is—the desire for the puff of friendly wind that should urge on the new venture, the nobler determination to do without adventitious aid, and the half-pathetic, half-humorous touches telling of the father's pleasure in his restored home and the society of his children. No. 13, Young Street, Kensington, these letters are dated from. There Thackeray, after living a bachelor life of lodgings, in Jermyn Street, and elsewhere, for the last six or seven years—had once more become a householder. There the later childhood of his daughters was passed, and Mrs. Ritchie doubtless acquired the love for "Old Kensington," which finds such pleasant expression in the book of that name. Passing by this house, in after-days, with Fields, the American publisher, Thackeray exclaimed "with mock gravity, 'Down on your knees, you rogue, for here "Vanity Fair" was penned! And I will go down with you, for I have a high opinion of that little production myself.'" [2]

[1] Quoted from the "Memoir" of Aytoun, by Sir Theodore Martin.

[2] "Yesterdays with Authors," by James T. Fields.

The "little production" pursued its monthly course from January, 1847, to July, 1848; and meanwhile Thackeray, far from relaxing his hold on *Punch*, was executing some of his very best work for that paper. Simultaneously with his own masterpiece appeared, under the general title of "*Punch's* Prize Novelists," a series of parodies of the novels of his contemporaries. They are among the finest things of the kind ever written. My own favourite is "Codlingsby, by B. de Shrewsberry, Esq."—under which thin disguise Disraeli stands revealed. One can but admire the audacity of the thing—the amazing perfections and wealth of the hero, Rafael Mendoza; his magical performances in his Eastern canoe as, "smoking a narghilly," he easily distances the contending eights; his prowess in the town and gown row; his gift of "ten thousand pounds to each of the ten children" of the huge bargeman whom he kills in single combat; his remarks to Lord Codlingsby as they are passing through the outer shop to "a mansion" of more than Oriental magnificence in Holywell Street: "I have sold bundles and bundles of these [pencils]," said Rafael. "My little brother is now out with oranges in Piccadilly. I am bringing him up to be the head of our house in Amsterdam. We all do it. I had myself to see Rothschild in Eaton Place this morning about the Irish loan, of which I have taken three millions: and as I wanted to walk, I carried the [old clothes] bag." And that superb final touch when the Jew, dismissing Codlingsby, whispers, "His Majesty [the French king] is one of *us*; . . . so is the Pope of Rome; so is . . . a whisper concealed the rest." Farce! Yes, no doubt it's farce. But

it's farce that hits the weak points in Disraeli's novels; and the fun is irresistible. Nor much less amusing is "Phil Fogarty, a tale of the fighting Onety-oneth, by Harry Rollicker"—after the reading whereof Lever declared, in all good humour, that he might "shut up shop," and actually changed the character of his novels.

It is not very clear at what time the world began to be conscious that "Vanity Fair" was a novel of altogether exceptional power and vitality. The first numbers appear to have created no very great sensation. Here and there, doubtless, a reader might be found capable of discovering for himself or herself that the book was a work of genius. Thus on the 16th of September, 1847, Mrs. Carlyle writes to her husband: "I brought away the last four numbers of 'Vanity Fair,' and read one of them in bed during the night. Very good indeed, beats Dickens out of the world." And Charlotte Brontë, as we shall presently see, wanted no one to show her how admirable the book was. But the general reader hesitated, and required direction. He was probably a little disconcerted by the absence of heroics on the author's part, and the steady determination to paint mankind with its faults and meannesses, and surrounded by no romantic halo. However, in January, 1848, an article calculated to excite public interest appeared in *The Edinburgh Review*. It was from the pen of Hayward, the noted social talker, and a friend of Thackeray. Hayward spoke out. He said: "At this moment the rising generation are supplied with the best of their mental aliment by writers whose names are a dead letter to the mass, and among the most remarkable of these is

Michael Angelo Titmarsh, alias William Makepeace Thackeray." He gave a slight sketch of Thackeray's career, saying, "We well remember ten or twelve years ago finding him day after day engaged in copying pictures in the Louvre, in order to qualify himself for his intended profession." And then he uttered words fitting and right as to the quality of the book itself, or rather as to so much of it as had then been published. The review did what it was intended to do, stimulating public curiosity, and, as there seems no reason to doubt, contributing to the author's success. Nor can I help thinking that Charlotte Brontë did yeoman's service in the same cause. Her novel of "Jane Eyre" had appeared in the October of 1847, and taken the world by storm. A second edition was called for, and on the 21st of December—that is before the appearance of the article in *The Edinburgh Review*—she wrote for that edition a preface, of which the following are the concluding words:—

"There is a man in our own days whose words are not framed to tickle delicate ears: who, to my thinking, comes before the great ones of society, much as the son of Imlah came before the throned kings of Judah and Israel; and who speaks truth as deep, with a power as prophet-like and as vital—a mien as dauntless and as daring. Is the satirist of 'Vanity Fair' admired in high places? I cannot tell; but I think if some of those amongst whom he hurls the Greek fire of his sarcasm, and over whom he flashes the levin-brand of his denunciation, were to take his warnings in time, they or their seed might yet escape a fatal Ramoth-Gilead.

"Why have I alluded to this man? I have alluded to him, Reader, because I think I see in him an intellect profounder and more unique than his contemporaries have yet recognized; because

I regard him as the first social regenerator of the day—as the very master of that working corps who would restore to rectitude the warped system of things; because I think no commentator on his writings has yet found the comparison that suits him, the terms which rightly characterize his talent. They say he is like Fielding: they talk of his wit, humour, comic powers. He resembles Fielding as an eagle does a vulture: Fielding could stoop on carrion, but Thackeray never does. His wit is bright, his humour attractive, but both bear the same relation to his serious genius that the mere lambent sheet-lightning playing under the edge of the summer cloud does to the electric death-spark hid in its womb. Finally, I have alluded to Mr. Thackeray because to him—if he will accept the tribute of a total stranger—I have dedicated this second edition of 'JANE EYRE.'"

Here was no "puff" of private friendship, such as Thackeray had first desired, and then shrunk from. "Currer Bell" knew nothing of Thackeray when she penned these lines. He was no Micaiah, as she supposed, no rugged prophet foretelling ruin to Ahab and his host, but an English gentleman—albeit a gentleman of genius—with the tastes and fastidiousness of his class. Still, though the eulogy may have been misdirected, I cannot but think that words so fiery, coming from the pen of the more popular novelist of the two,[1] must have contributed powerfully to the success of "Vanity Fair." And, oddly enough, in the world's wonder as to who "Currer Bell" might really be, rumours arose connecting her—for a woman's hand was surmised—with Thackeray. From the union of ignorance and curiosity sprang the usual progeny of lies. The authoress

[1] In November, 1848, Sara Coleridge writes of "Vanity Fair": "In knowledge of life and delineation of character it seems to me quite equal to 'Jane Eyre,' *though it has never been so popular.*"

of "Jane Eyre," it was suggested, had been governess to Thackeray's children—she had been, it was darkly hinted, his mistress. They had quarrelled, and avenged themselves, each of the other, in literary fashion. *She* was the Becky Sharp of "Vanity Fair." *He* was the Rochester of "Jane Eyre."[1] Lies, lies, how they gather round any human being who is prominent among his fellows! Well might Thackeray, discoursing afterwards, in his inimitable "Roundabout" way, "On a hundred years hence," ask this question: "Good gracious! how do lies begin?"

Quite apart, however, from all aid of puff, praise, or scandal, it is difficult to conceive that "Vanity Fair" should not, as it proceeded, have made its way by sheer inherent power. There it lies before me, in the dear old original edition, with the "illustrations on steel and wood by the author"—illustrations in which there may often be

> "A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,
> The body, so to speak,"

[1] These rumours were discussed, more than half seriously, in a very unworthy article on "Vanity Fair" and "Jane Eyre" in *The Quarterly Review* for January, 1849. According to Mr. Wemyss Reid it was "the rumour that" she "had satirized Mr. Thackeray under the character of Rochester, and had even obtruded on the sorrows of his private life," which brought Charlotte Brontë to London, and induced her to reveal her name to her publisher. Mrs. Gaskell, on the other hand, assigns the cause of the journey to a business matter, involving the separate identity of the three sisters. Mrs. Gaskell's account is the more circumstantial, and seems the more probable of the two. But it is, of course, possible that Charlotte Brontë came to London, and took off her anonymous mask, for more reasons than one.

but in which the soul of the book, the real intention of the writer, shows so clearly. Yes, there it lies, and as one turns over the familiar pages one is carried away from this surrounding every-day world of ours into a world almost as real and well known. Becky Sharp — and I name her first, for if the novel be "without a hero," it is not without a heroine, and she quite outshines dear good Amelia;—Amelia herself; George Osborne who loves Amelia so ill, and Dobbin who loves her so well; old Osborne, the purse-proud merchant; Jos. Sedley the numskull Indian civilian; the various members of the Crawley family—the amazing old coarse miserly baronet, and his sons, Pitt the diplomatist, and Rawdon the heavy dragoon whom Kingsley said he would rather have drawn than any of his own characters;—my Lord Marquis of Steyne; Mrs. Peggy O'Dowd, with her kind heart, brogue, and comicalities;—these and so many more—who does not know them all? No doubt the world in which they move and have their being is not a heroic world. It is a world that shows its seamy side freely, and where there is very little that is good and great, and none, even of that little, altogether without a flaw. Has not Major Dobbin big feet? Does not Amelia, of whom the author is evidently fond, display on more than one occasion lamentable weakness of character? The "big bow-wow business," as Scott called it, was not at all in Thackeray's way. He took men and women as he found them, certainly never making them "look larger than human," or making them express their sentiments through a speaking-trumpet. And perhaps, in conse-

quence, they are all the more clearly recognizable as real men and women.

Then, too, the style, how admirable it is! Reader, if ever there reach you a whisper in dispraise of Thackeray—and such have been muttered ere now in Boston, Edinburgh, Paris, possibly in London—re-read the chapters of "Vanity Fair" in which Thackeray, "not claiming to rank among the military novelists," and avowing that his "place is with the non-combatants," describes what happened among his *dramatis personæ* in Brussels, after the army had marched out to meet the French at Waterloo. With those chapters fresh in your memory, I venture to aver that all hostile carpings will leave your admiration scatheless.

In January, 1847, Thackeray had been longing for the success of his new venture, and in 1848 its success was assured.[1] Writing on the 4th of May, Fitzgerald observes: "Thackeray is progressing greatly in his line: he publishes a novel in Nos.—'Vanity Fair'—which began dull I thought: but gets better every No., and has some very fine things indeed in it. He is become a great man, I am told: goes to Holland House, and Devonshire House; and for some reason or other will not write a word to me. But I am sure this is not because he is asked to Holland House." And again on the 2nd of July he writes: "Thackeray is a great man:

[1] Thackeray is said to have been called to the Bar by the Hon. Society of the Middle Temple on the 26th of May, 1848. This may have been in view of some government appointment, or an appointment as a police magistrate—either of which Thackeray would seem, at about this time, to have desired. Needless to say he never practised as a barrister.

goes to Devonshire House, &c.; and his book (which is capital) is read by the great, and will, I hope, do them good." On the 19th of May, 1849, another old friend, Monckton Milnes, writes, "Thackeray is winning great social success, dining at the Academy, Sir R. Peel's, &c." Thackeray, in short, now stepped forward into his right position as one of the very foremost writers of his time. And society took him up, as society does take up a successful author who is willing to be made much of and caressed. Equal to the greatest in virtue of his genius, he became the associate and friend of the great, and practically, in social position, a member of the aristocracy.[1]

Was love of society a fault on Thackeray's part? That is a matter with respect to which there has been more than one opinion. Harriet Martineau — who, however, knew him but slightly, and whose pen was not always either kindly or even just[2] — puts the adverse case thus: "Mr. Thackeray has said more, and more effectually, about snobs and snobbism than any other man; and yet his frittered life, and his obedience to

[1] Mr. Walter Besant, in his "Fifty Years Ago," says: "I, for one, have never been able to understand how Thackeray got his knowledge of these exclusive circles. Instead of dancing at Almack's, he was taking his chop and stout at The Cock; instead of gambling at Crockford's, he was writing 'copy' for any paper which would take it. When and where did he meet Miss Newcome and Lady Kew and Lord Steyne?" All this is, I venture to think, founded on a misapprehension as to Thackeray's real social position.

[2] "I confess to being unable to read 'Vanity Fair' from the disgust it occasions." These extracts are from the "Autobiography."

the call of the great are the observed of all observers. As it is so, so it must be; but 'O the pity of it, the pity of it.' Great and unusual allowance is to be made in his case, I am aware; but this does not lessen the concern occasioned by the spectacle of one after another of the aristocracy of nature making the ko-too to the aristocracy of accident." Charles Knight, on the other hand, declares: "My conviction was that, beneath an affectation of cynicism, there was a tenderness of heart which he was more eager to repress than to exhibit; *that he was no idolater of rank.*" The truth I take to be that, though a Liberal in his opinions, he was by nature and personal taste an aristocrat. He belonged originally, it should always be remembered, to quite the upper middle class,—not, like Dickens, to the lower strata of that class,—and society's manners, and speech, and, to a great extent, tone of thought, were congenial to him. Then, too, as should also be borne in mind, he was the novelist of society—society formed great part of his special field of observation. He had to frequent it for the purposes of his art. "If I don't go out and mingle in society," he once said to Mr. Bedingfield's mother, "I can't write." His own record of himself, as given to John Esten Cooke, is: "I like what are called Bohemians, and fellows of that sort. I have seen all sorts of society—dukes and duchesses, lords and ladies, authors and actors and painters, and, taken altogether, I think I like painters the best, and 'Bohemians' generally. They are more natural and unconventional." This is not the language of a man unduly devoted to rank. Nor can I trace any evidence

that he ever jeopardized his own dignity in any way by striving for social distinction. And, for the rest, even if a man has written "The Book of Snobs," he is surely entitled to choose what company he likes.

Another question, closely allied to this, is the question of the influence which Thackeray's success had upon his own character. The Major D—— who had first met him during the Irish tour, gives it as his opinion that "perhaps no man was ever so much improved by success." But this view was clearly not universal among Thackeray's older friends. For instance, he dined with Sir Frederick Pollock on the 7th of May, 1849, and the latter records: "Thackeray has grown a little *blasé*, and is not such good company as he used to be." And again, after mentioning a dinner on the 21st of October following, the same writer says: "No one could be more free from egotism than Dickens was. He never talked about himself or his books, and was thus in great contrast with Thackeray who, after he became famous, liked no subject so well." Fitzgerald at first seems not to have had this feeling. He writes in 1849: "I have seen Thackeray three or four times. *He is just the same.* All the world admires 'Vanity Fair,' and the author is courted by dukes and duchesses, and wits of both sexes." But on the 17th of the following April his tone alters: "Thackeray is in such a great world that I am afraid of him; he gets tired of me, and we are content to regard each other at a distance." And afterwards, notwithstanding the real love that Thackeray continued to entertain for Fitzgerald, the distance evidently grew greater. Writing to Laurence, the painter, on the 7th of

January, 1864, and therefore but a few days after the great man's death, Fitzgerald says: "I am surprised almost to find how much I am thinking of him, so little I had seen him for the last ten years; not once for the last five. I had been told—by you for one—that he was spoiled. I am glad, therefore, that I have scarce seen him since he was 'old Thackeray.'" And again, in similar strain, he writes, at about the same time, of his "interest" in Thackeray having been "a little gone from hearing he had become somewhat spoiled: which also some of his later writings hinted . . . of themselves."

Now for any one who never knew Thackeray to criticize the recorded opinions of those who did, may seem presumptuous. Nor would one venture perhaps to do it if all the recorded opinions were unanimous. But this is far from being the case. Major D——'s view has just been quoted. At about the same time that Sir F. Pollock was speaking of Thackeray as being "*blasé*," and Fitzgerald as being given over to the society of dukes, Albert Smith, the Bohemian of Bohemians, writes to George Hodder: "Last night I met Thackeray at the Cyder Cellars, and we stayed there until three in the morning. He is a very jolly fellow, and no 'High art' about him." This suggests a very different picture. And where the evidence is conflicting, the critic may venture to intervene. The fact, I imagine, is that, making allowance for a change in physical health, and a more assured and brilliant social position, Thackeray the successful novelist remained pretty much the Thackeray of less prosperous days. That his old friends thought they saw an alteration

is comprehensible enough. When a man has walked as an ordinary man among his fellows, and suddenly comes to be recognized as a great man, a certain expectation of arrogance and self-complacency is natural. People imagine that he will be proud, and interpret his actions, even those that are most innocent, accordingly. Is he absent, curt of manner, uninterested, evidently bored?—then the signs of his being spoilt are manifest—although, Heaven knows, even the unprosperous are not always of faultless temper. And to such misinterpretations this particular great man was singularly open. His health had begun to fail. Manifold labours, habitual late hours, the utter unsettling of his home-life for the last few years, had begun to tell upon him. He was increasingly subject to terrible fits of pain. His peculiarly sensitive nature made him liable to attacks of depression. At one time the most pleasant, genial of companions, frolicsome as a boy and overflowing with high spirits, at another time—and with the same persons, perhaps, and within a few hours—he would be taciturn, almost repellent. "See how spoilt he is," seemed the natural but false conclusion. He was not spoilt, only weary, ill, and of nerves greatly overstrung.

But as to all this, it may be well to quote his own defence, written, evidently in sorrow, to his relative, Mrs. Bayne :—

"When a man gets this character (of being haughty and supercilious to old acquaintances) he never loses it. . . . This opinion once put forth against a man, all his friends believe it, accommodate themselves to the new theory, see coolness where none is meant. They won't allow for the *time* an immensely enlarged acquaintance

occupies, and fancy I am dangling after lords and fine people because I am not so much in their drawing-rooms as in former days. They don't know in what a whirl a man plunges who is engaged in my business. Since I began this work, besides travelling, reading, seeing people, dining—when I am forced out and would long to be quiet—I write at the rate of 5,000 letters a year. I have a heap before me now—six of them are about lectures—one from an old gentleman whom I met on the railroad, and who sends me his fugitive poems. I must read them, answer and compliment old gentleman. Another from a poor widow, in bad spelling, asking for help. Nobody knows this work until he is in it; and of course, with all this, old friends hint you are changed, you are forsaking us for great people, and so forth, and so forth."

Go where one will in this man's career, one finds acts thoughtful, courteous, or kindly. Take the following from the history of the years 1848 and 1849. On the 9th of April, in the first of these years, apprehension reigned in London, for the great Chartist outbreak was expected on the following day. Thackeray was dining out, but "the cloth had scarcely been removed when he suddenly started up and said, 'Pray excuse me, I must go. I left my children in terror that something dreadful was about to happen. I am unfit for society. Good-night.'"[1] In the same year, too, to take an instance of his courtesy, Mrs. Fanny Kemble records how she wrote to him for an autograph, and how he sent it and then called on her, "and was delightful." And in the spring of 1850—I am giving an instance here of his kindly sensibility—when Lady Blessington's strange household was broken up, and her goods about to be brought to the hammer, he came, like many of the old

[1] Charles Knight's "Passages from a Working Life."

habitués of the place, to look over the house in Kensington Gore ;—but was the only one at all affected. "Mons. Thackeray," wrote the French valet to Lady Blessington, who had taken refuge in Paris—"Mons. Thackeray came also, and had tears in his eyes as he spoke. He is perhaps the only person whom I saw really affected by your departure." Thackeray, too, has described this visit in one of his charming letters to Mrs. Brookfield :—

"I have just come away from a dismal sight : Gore House full of snobs looking at the furniture. Foul Jews ; odious bombazine women, who drove up in mysterious flys which they had hired—the wretches, . . . so as to come in state to a fashionable lounge ; brutes keeping their hats on in the kind old drawing-room,—I longed to knock some of them off, and say, 'Sir, be civil in a lady's room . . .' There was one of the servants there, not a powdered one, but a butler, a *what-d'you-call-it*. My heart melted towards him, and I gave him a pound. Ah ! it was a strange, sad picture of 'Vanity Fair.' My mind is all boiling up with it."

The last number of "Vanity Fair" was published in July, 1848, and the first number of "Pendennis" appeared at the beginning of the following November. This book, as has been already remarked, contains more of Thackeray's own personal history than any of his other books. Clavering, where Arthur Pendennis spends so much of his youth, is, of course, Ottery St. Mary ; and in the school life, university life, legal life, literary life of that young man, Thackeray had unquestionably put a great deal of his own experience. Nay, as if to mark how close was the connection between the author and the character he had created, two of the later books, "The Newcomes" and "Philip,"

purport to be written by the imaginary hero of this story. And Thackeray had a great fondness for Arthur Pendennis. "He is a very good-natured, generous young fellow," he wrote to Mrs. Brookfield while the book was being written, "and I begin to like him considerably. I wonder whether he is interesting to me for selfish reasons, and because I fancy we resemble each other in many points, and whether I can get the public to like him too."

"Pendennis," therefore, has a curious semi-autobiographical interest. But quite apart from that, it is a delightful, a great book, and contains some of the best scenes that Thackeray ever described, some of the best characters he ever painted. Among the latter comes, first and foremost, an old flame of mine, and probably of many men who are now no longer young—I mean, of course, Laura Bell. Thackeray was not usually at his happiest when dealing with good women. "I am afraid I don't respect your sex enough," he says in the letter to Mrs. Brookfield, from which I have just quoted; adding, "Yes, I do, when they are occupied with loving and sentiment rather than with other business of life." And so when his women are affectionate, kindly, good, like Amelia, or Mrs. Pendennis *mère*, or Mrs. Philip Firmin, or Mrs. Shandon, they are apt to be lacking in wisdom. But Laura is an exception. She is not only good all through, with an old-fashioned religious goodness, but she is capable and clever—a pearl among women. Ascribe it to jealousy if you will—and for writing this sentence I shall be in Mr. Merivale's black books for ever—but I don't consider Master Arthur was

good enough for her. She gave him a heart of pure gold. He gave her, in exchange, a heart containing gold too, no doubt, but also some alloy of baser metal.

Then besides Laura, what a crowd of living real characters! As with the characters in "Vanity Fair," to evoke them in thought is like passing into a company of old familiar friends and acquaintances. Here's George Warrington, right sturdy good fellow, and able journalist. Here's Major Pendennis, Half Pay: he is a worldling of the world without question, and hanger-on of the great, but with what admirable skill he routs his rebellious valet Morgan, and defeats Captain Costigan! Then here's Costigan, with his sodden face, and slouching drunkard's manner; and his daughter, the handsome Fotheringay; and little Bows, the fiddler, her teacher in the actor's art; and Altamont, the scoundrel; and Sir Francis Clavering, the no less a scoundrel, and of a more sneaking kind; and Captain Strong, the citizen of the world; and Mirobolant, the French artist in cookery; and poor little flirting Fanny Bolton; and Foker, the rich brewer's son, with a core of real stuff and sound sense in his otherwise ramshackle character; and, and—how many more, not forgetting Miss Blanche Amory, the Becky Sharp of "Pendennis." Of this enigmatic young lady, the authoress of "*Mes Larmes*," much might be said. In general, few occupations can be considered more futile than the endeavour to ascertain what particular person from the actual world served as the model for a character in fiction. The novelist may, like the artist, make use of the living model; but, like the artist, he alters, corrects, idealizes, recreates, and, except in very

peculiar cases, it is only with the ultimate product that the world has much concern. For instance, are we much advantaged when we know that Foker's peculiarities are supposed to have been copied from those of a certain Mr. Arcedeckne, who frequented the Garrick Club? Does such information throw a flood of light on Thackeray's art? But with regard to Blanche Amory, I own that there is a certain amusement in meeting with her in the real life of Mrs. Carlyle's Correspondence —in thinking that this sham of shams inflicted herself upon the Sage of Chelsea. "Not that poor little —— is quite such a little devil as Thackeray, who has detested her from a child, has here represented. But the looks, the manner, the wiles, the *larmes*, and all that sort of thing, are perfect."—"'Oh! my dear,' Mr. Carlyle said when she went away, 'we cannot be sufficiently thankful.'"[1]

After the publication of the eleventh number of "Pendennis," in September, 1849, there came a break for four months. Thackeray was ill, sick well-nigh unto death, in the latter part of September and during October and November, and kindly tended by Dr. Elliotson, to whom "Pendennis" was afterwards dedicated, and by Dr. Merriman, of Kensington Square. On the 7th of December Fitzgerald records that he had seen "poor old Thackeray," who was getting "slowly better of a bilious fever that had almost killed him"; and it is to be feared that the diarist was somewhat of a Job's comforter, if he actually told the convalescent that "Pendennis" was

[1] See vol. ii. of "Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle," pp. 143 to 147, for a full account of Blanche Amory's *alter ego*.

"dull as it got on," and that "he would do well to take the opportunity of his illness to discontinue it altogether"—which was the opinion that Fitzgerald formed at the time. Within a few days of this, Thackeray made the personal acquaintance of one who appraised the value of his work more justly. Charlotte Brontë had come to town from the seclusion of the vicarage at Haworth, stipulating with her hosts that she should be expected to meet very few people; but with a strong desire to see and know the great author of "Vanity Fair." They met, this man and woman of genius, and their relations form a curious, interesting chapter in the history of literature. She, as may be gathered from the dedication of the second edition of "Jane Eyre," evidently expected to find in him a prophet full of earnestness and fervour, an iconoclast eager to break in pieces the gods of society. And she found instead a polished man of the world, clever, very clever—in her admiration for his intellectual gifts she never wavered—but with no particular mission to regenerate anything or anybody, and mingling jest and earnest in a way that to her straightforward unconventional mind was extremely disconcerting.[1] "Mr. Thackeray . . .," she writes, "is a man of very quiet, simple demeanour; he is, however, looked upon with some awe, and even distrust. His conversation is very peculiar, too perverse to be pleasant." And again, after receiving a letter from him: "Thackeray's feelings are not such as can be gauged by

[1] "She told me [Mrs. Gaskell] how difficult she found it, this first time of meeting Mr. Thackeray, to decide whether he was speaking in jest or in earnest."

ordinary calculation: variable weather is what I should ever expect from that quarter. Yet in correspondence, as in verbal intercourse, that would torment me." But to his intellectual power, as I have said, she did full justice. "Thackeray is a Titan of mind. His presence and powers impress one deeply in an intellectual sense; I do not know him or see him as a man. All the others are subordinate. . . . I felt sufficiently at my ease with all but Thackeray; with him I was fearfully stupid." And in the June following, the June of 1850, there was a memorable interview, in which the bold little Yorkshire-woman measured her strength against the colossus.

"He made a morning call," she writes, "and sat above two hours. Mr. Smith only"—her kind host, of the firm of Smith and Elder—"was in the room the whole time. He described it afterwards as 'a queer scene,' and I suppose it was. The giant sate before me; I was moved to speak to him of some of his shortcomings (literary, of course); one by one the faults came into my head, and one by one I brought them out, and sought some explanation or defence. He did defend himself like a great Turk and heathen; that is to say, the excuses were often worse than the crime itself. The matter ended in decent amity; if all be well I am to dine at his house this evening" (12th June).

What were the crimes thus boldly brought home to the great man? Alas! no more than a conjectural answer can be given. Mr. Smith, it would seem, was no Boswell, and the conversation passed unreported. Thackeray, as we know from Sir F. Pollock's "Personal Remembrances," felt just a trifle ruffled by the references to himself in Mrs. Gaskell's life of her friend; and in his admirable short paper, entitled "The Last Sketch," speaks thus:—

"I saw her [Charlotte Brontë] first just as I rose out of an illness from which I had never thought to recover. I remember the trembling little frame, the little hand, the great honest eyes. An impetuous honesty seemed to me to characterize the woman. Twice I recollect she took me to task for what she held to be errors of doctrine. Once about Fielding we had a disputation. She spoke her mind out. She jumped too rapidly at conclusions. (I have smiled at one or two passages in the 'Biography,' in which my own disposition or behaviour forms the subject of talk.) She formed conclusions that might be wrong, and built up whole theories of character upon them. New to the London world, she entered it with an independent, indomitable spirit of her own; and judged of contemporaries, and especially spied out arrogance and affectation, with extraordinary keenness of vision. She was angry with her favourites if their conduct or conversation fell below her ideal."

But still, with all this, we don't know what the disputation was about, for the discussion on Fielding would presumably take place later, after the delivery of Thackeray's Lectures on the Humourists, when Charlotte Brontë, with the miserable tragedy of her brother's life and death still fresh in mind, thought, not unnaturally, that Thackeray had spoken too leniently of Fielding's foibles.

Yet one extract more from Charlotte Brontë's Life. When she had first seen Laurence's portrait of Thackeray, she "stood before it some time in silence," and then her "first words" were: "And there came up a lion out of Judah!" An engraving from the picture was given her, and "hung up in state" among her household gods. Then she writes:—

"My father stood for a quarter of an hour this morning examining the great man's picture. The conclusion of his survey was that he thought it a puzzling head; if he had known nothing previously

of the original's character he could not have read it in his features. I wonder at this. To me the broad brow seems to express intellect. Certain lines about the nose and cheek betray the satirist and cynic; the mouth indicates a child-like simplicity—perhaps even a degree of irresoluteness, inconsistency—weakness in short, but a weakness not unamiable. . . . A certain not quite Christian expression—'not to put too fine a point upon it'—an expression of *spite*, most vividly marked in the original, is here softened, and perhaps a little—a very little of the power has escaped in this ameliorating process.'

CHAPTER X.

(By Frank T. Marzials.)

OF the events of 1849 and 1850 there might be many more things to say, with the help of the volume of Thackeray's letters published in 1887, and other scattered reminiscences. But the more things would be small things—such as trips to Paris—by the by he was there enjoying himself a good deal in September, 1849, just before the bilious fever;—little household events and visits; meetings with friends, acquaintances, and persons of more or less note; rides in the park; experiences among French actresses and men of letters; days of energy and days of idleness,—the books read and admired, as Dumas' "Vicomte de Bragelonne," or "David Copperfield;"—the "delightful" Sunday morning spent by the loving father with "Annie," "when she read me the 'Deserted Village,' and we talked about it,"—all the small chronicle in short of a successful, bright, busy, literary life. And what object would it serve to epitomize such a chronicle? Thackeray's letters are charming. He had the rare gift, the very rare gift, of writing letters that possess all the

spontaneity and naturalness of good private correspondence, and yet are so dainty of expression, so full of grace, so marked by felicity and a certain *unforeseenness* of thought and phrase, that they acquire permanent literary interest and value. In his hands the nothings of daily life are transmuted. They change into gold. But to try a shortened paraphrase would be to turn the gold into dross. And for lengthened quotation this is not the place.

So only one fact shall be mentioned in connection with this time, and that mainly for the purpose of showing how slow, even yet, was the world to recognize his greatness. In January, 1850, Milman and Hallam, two sufficient sponsors one would have thought, tried to get him into the Athenæum Club. But though supported by Macaulay and Lord Mahon and Croker,—by "every man," Dean Milman asserted, "whose opinion Mr. Thackeray would value,"—he was black-balled. Whereupon Thackeray wrote to Hayward, on the 1st of February, a good-tempered note:—

"I was quite prepared for the issue of the kind effort made at the Athenæum on my behalf; indeed, as a satirical writer, I rather wonder that I have not made more enemies than I have. I don't mean enemies in a bad sense, but men conscientiously opposed to my style, art, opinions, impertinences, and so forth. There must be thousands of men to whom the practice of ridicule must be very offensive; doesn't one see such in society or in one's own family? persons whose nature was not gifted with a sense of humour. Such a man would be wrong not to give me a black-ball, or whatever it is called, a negatory nod of his honest, respectable, stupid old head. And I submit to his verdict without the slightest feeling of animosity against my judge. Why, Doctor Johnson would certainly have

black-balled Fielding, whom he pronounced 'a dull fellow, sir, a dull fellow'! . . . Didn't I tell you once before that I feel frightened almost at the kindness of people regarding me? May we all be honest fellows, and keep our heads from too much vanity." [1]

One other point should, however, be noted as marking the year 1850. In that year, if we except one later flicker in 1854, Thackeray's long connection with *Punch* died out. This can scarcely have been without a pang. He had done good service for the paper; and the paper had given him guineas at a time when guineas were scarce and proportionally welcome. He had too, we may be sure, enjoyed to the very fullest the convivialities, the wit-combats, the quips and cranks, all the fun and frolic and laughter, that prevailed among the brilliant little band who gathered round the editorial chair. At the weekly dinners he is said to have sat habitually between Douglas Jerrold, most nimble-witted of the moderns, and Gilbert A'Beckett; and he had, doubtless, contributed his full share to the general hilarity. In May, 1848, eighty citizens of Edinburgh had singled him out, whether as chief of the literary staff, as he unquestionably was, or from particular regard, and sent him a silver statuette of Mr. Punch — which he had acknowledged, it may be added, in a graceful and manly letter. *Punch* must have seemed scarce *Punch* without him. Doyle had left the paper because of

[1] "A Selection from the Correspondence of Abraham Hayward, Q.C." The Club, it is but right to say, reversed its judgment a year afterwards, and duly elected Thackeray on the 25th of February, 1851. He did much of his work there in after days.

its attacks on the Roman Catholics. "Another member of Mr. Punch's cabinet," says Thackeray, "the biographer of Jeames, the author of the 'Snob Papers,' resigned his functions on account of Mr. Punch's assaults upon the present Emperor of the French nation, whose anger Jeames thought it was unpatriotic to arouse." That he left the paper in all friendliness is clear. Writing afterwards, on September 7, 1856, about one of the staff who had died, and suggesting help for the family, as his kindly manner was, he said: "It is through my connection with *Punch* that I owe the good chances that have lately befallen me, and have had so many kind offers of help in my own days of trouble that I would thankfully aid a friend whom Death has called away."

Thackeray was too generous and open-handed to be a very rigid economist. He had always been ready to give when he was poor; he gave liberally now that he was comparatively prosperous; and even apart from his charities I do not gather that he practised the virtue of saving in small things. Anyhow, there must have been some of "that eternal want of pence which vexes public men" to induce him to come forward as a lecturer in 1851. For he was one of the most nervous of mortals. As a speaker,—that is, one who speaks as distinguished from one who reads,—he was a failure. While Dickens declared that he had never from the beginning felt the least diffidence in addressing an audience, *he*, to the end, could not face the necessity for making a speech without quaking. He was miserable in the prospect, pretty sure to break down in the performance, and unhappy in the after sense of a fiasco. On these points the evidence is

overwhelming.[1] He himself says in "Philip": "I, for my part, own that I am in a state of tremor and absence of mind before the operation; . . . in a condition of imbecility during the business; and that I am sure of a headache and indigestion the next morning." And though reading a lecture is a much less formidable matter than making a speech, it is clear that Thackeray looked forward to his course with the greatest trepidation. He told Mrs. Fanny Kemble beforehand that "he was so nervous about it that he was afraid he would break down,"—and here is the picture she gives of his condition on the afternoon when the first lecture was delivered:—

"I found him standing like a forlorn disconsolate giant in the middle of the room, gazing about him. 'Oh, Lord!' he exclaimed, as he shook hands with me, 'I'm sick at my stomach with fright!' I spoke some words of encouragement to him, and was going away, but he held my hand like a scared child, crying, 'Oh, don't leave me'! 'But,' said I, 'Thackeray, you mustn't stand here. Your audience are beginning to come in;' and I drew him from the middle of his chairs and benches, which were beginning to be occupied, into the retiring-room adjoining the lecture-room. . . . Here he began pacing up and down, literally wringing his hands in nervous distress. 'Now,' said I, 'what shall I do? Shall I stay with you till you begin, or shall I go and leave you alone to collect yourself?' 'Oh,' he said, 'if I could only get at that confounded thing (the lecture) to have a last look at it!' 'Where is it?' said I. 'Oh! in the next room on the reading-desk.'"

She went in to fetch the manuscript,—and in so doing,

[1] See, *e.g.*, Hodder's "Memories of my Time," Fields' "Yesterdays with Authors," and Charles Knight's "Passages from a Working Life."

to her great dismay, tumbled it down and disarranged it hopelessly. "My dear soul," said the lecturer, with much kindness and patience, "you couldn't have done better for me. I have just a quarter of an hour to wait here, and it will take me about that to page this again, and it's the best thing in the world that could have happened."[1]

The lectures to which Thackeray had looked forward so nervously were delivered at Willis's Rooms,—"where the Almack balls are held, a great painted and gilded saloon with long sofas for benches,"—says Charlotte Brontë. They were delivered in the height of the season of the Exhibition year, the first being given on the 22nd of May,[2] and all the world of fashion and letters seem to have been among the audiences. Charlotte Brontë herself was present at the second, and speaks of having been introduced to Lord Carlisle and Monckton Milnes. Caroline Fox mentions Mrs. Carlyle, Dickens, and Leslie, the Royal Academician, as present on the 13th of June, besides "innumerable noteworthy people." Carlyle, Macaulay, and Hallam, are said to have heard one or more of the lectures; and Harriet Martineau, as we know, was present too. As to the effect produced, Harriet Martineau says nothing. Charlotte Brontë heard the second, which, according to the contemporary account in *The Times*, was far better

[1] Mrs. Fanny Kemble's "Records of Later Life."

[2] It may be noted, for the benefit of the curious, that the course was delivered for the first time on the Thursday afternoons of the 22nd and 29th of May, 12th, 19th, and 26th of June, and 3rd of July, and that the price of admission was £2 2s. for the set of six lectures (reserved seats); and 7s. 6d. for a single seat (unreserved). *The Times* noticed some of the lectures, but not all.

delivered than the first, Thackeray having "evidently measured the size of the room and the capability of his voice"—and she remarks: "There is a quite a *furore* for his lectures. They are a sort of essays, characterized by his own peculiar originality and power, and delivered with a finished taste and ease, which is felt but cannot be described." Caroline Fox observes: "Thackeray is a much older looking man than I had expected; a square, powerful face, and most acute and sparkling eyes, grayish hairs and eyebrows. He reads in a definite, rather dry manner, but makes you understand thoroughly what he is about."

Here, however, I am in a position to check the contemporary chroniclers to some extent, for, though I did not hear the lectures of 1851, I did, as a young fellow, hear Thackeray lecture some years afterwards, and have a most definite recollection of his style and manner. These were in marked contrast to the style and manner of Dickens. But then it is right to remember that the two men, though both readers, were, in effect, pursuing totally different branches of the reader's art. Dickens was the dramatic elocutionist. He took from his works some passage in which the dramatic element predominated, emphasized that element still more by cutting down the narrative portions, and then threw himself into each character, *acting* it so far as it is possible to act a character by the voice alone. Thus, as you listened to him, you seemed to be hearing Betsy Prig, or Mrs. Gamp, Nancy, Chops the dwarf, Bob Sawyer, or Mrs. Raddle. The thing of its own kind was admirably done. Thackeray's

objects and aims were quite other. He was a lecturer pure and simple—not a lecturer, like Morley Punshon and J. B. Gough, relying for his effects on impassioned rhetoric, emphasized by voice and gesture — nothing could be less like what is usually called an "oration" than one of his lectures — but a lecturer who, having a piece of beautifully finished, brilliant prose to impart to an audience, delivered it simply, naturally, clearly, in the almost colloquial tones of a very pleasant voice. According to Charlotte Brontë's happy expression, there was "a finished taste and ease" about it all, a something high bred; and this was also the impression produced on Motley, the historian, who heard the lecture on George III., in 1858 :—

"I was much impressed," he says, in almost the same terms as Charlotte Brontë, "with the quiet, graceful ease with which he [Thackeray] read—just a few notes above the conversational level —but never rising into the declamatory. This light-in-hand manner suits well the delicate, hovering rather than superficial style of the composition. He skims lightly over the surface of the long epoch, throwing out a sketch here, exhibiting a characteristic trait there, and sprinkling about a few anecdotes, portraits, and historical allusions, running along from grave to gay, from lively to severe, moving and mocking the sensibilities in a breath, in a way which I should say was the perfection of lecturing to high-bred audiences. . . ."[1]

The expression "hovering," as applied to Thackeray's method, is admirable. Most men, when writing to be heard, not read, instinctively write with a view to broader and simpler effects of language, well knowing that an audience, even when unusually intelligent, has difficulty

[1] "The Correspondence of John Lothrop Motley."

in at once seizing beauties of a very delicate kind. Thackeray made no such concession. The style of the Lectures on the Humourists, first delivered in 1851, and on the Georges, delivered afterwards, is very brilliant without doubt; but it is also exquisitely finished, and dainty with a perfection that is rather of the literary than the oratorical art. How, then, did he cause the beauty of these lectures to be felt by those to whom they were addressed? The secret lay in an admirable quiet delivery that, without undue emphasis or pause for effect, gave the hearer the full value of every sentence. M. Renan, who is also a delicate "stylist," fails here as a lecturer. His delivery does not do justice to his manuscript. He is better to read than to listen to. With Thackeray the pleasure was equal. Indeed, after hearing several of the great *littérateur* lecturers of my day—Mr. Ruskin, Mr. Froude, Professor Tyndall, Professor Huxley, Matthew Arnold—I should say that I have never heard exactly the same effect produced. Perhaps Faraday, with great differences, of course, of matter, and some of manner, best gave a similar impression of perfect naturalness. Nor must it be supposed that the ease and conversational tone excluded a certain emotion perfectly felt through all the restraint. It is full thirty years since I heard him, and yet I hold still clear in my memory the very tones in which he spoke of his reputation for cynicism, and afterwards told us how his own child would come to him and ask why he did not "write a book like one of Mr. Dickens's books."

The matter of the Lectures on the Humourists is excellent. One feels in the reading that Thackeray

is a peer among his peers—a sort of elder brother, kindly, appreciative, and tolerant—as he discourses of Addison, Steele, Swift, Pope, Sterne, Fielding, Goldsmith. I know of no greater contrast in criticism, a contrast, be it said, not to the advantage of the French critic, than Thackeray's treatment of Pope and that of M. Taine. What allowance the Englishman makes for the physical ills that beset the "gallant little cripple;" with what a gentle hand he touches the painful places in that poor twisted body! M. Taine, irritated apparently that Pope will not fit into his conception of English literature, exhibits the same deformities almost savagely.

The Lectures on the Humourists were delivered in Manchester, Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh, and probably elsewhere, during the course of 1851. And in 1852 Thackeray published another book. On the 2nd of June in that year Fitzgerald writes: "Thackeray finished his novel last Saturday, and is going, I believe, to the Continent;" adding, a few days afterwards: "He will get £1000 for his novel." The novel in question was "Esmond."

Of this book it is difficult to speak in language that shall not seem to savour of exaggeration and hyperbole. But if that is the greatest historical novel in which the men and women most recognisably think the thoughts, speak the speech, do the acts of a past generation; in which those men and women are made to play their parts most naturally, and with least forcing, among the known historical events of the time when they are assumed to have lived; in which the style of the writing is most perfect, not only intrinsically, but also in its

keeping with the events narrated and the language in use at the time; in which the past is evoked by means that seem most simple, and give no impression at all of the enormous labour involved;—if, in short, the novel that best fulfils these conditions is the greatest historical novel, then is there nothing in the English language, or, it may be added, the French, to place, in this particular line, beside "Esmond." And I make this declaration, not only conscientiously believing the same to be true, but also bearing well in mind that there once lived such a person as Sir Walter Scott, who wrote some historical novels not without merit.

How did it come to pass that Thackeray reached such a height of perfection in this particular work? Why did he succeed so admirably in drawing a picture of life as it existed in the classic days of Anne? The reason I take to be because he was himself a great classic. The comparison between Thackeray and Dickens has been made almost to weariness; and yet, in the very frequency with which the two names have been brought together, there is evidence of more than a mere liking for a literary parallel. The men are each respectively the foremost representatives of a great cause. Dickens, as an artist, and he was a great artist, loved the exhibition of power. He gave habitually full and unrestrained expression to his thought, imagination, fancy. There was no reticence, no reserve in his manner. He sought habitually for strong effects in pathos and in humour. His descriptions are vivid and striking. He works either in full light or deep shadow, and with a brush always heavily charged with colour. And he had his reward. While the few admire

him for his genius, the many, who would not have been reached by art of a more delicate kind, love his work as they do that of no one else. He has with him the great non-literary public. Thackeray, on the other hand, was, as has just been said, a classic ; and if it be asked in what the classical spirit consists, I don't know that I can do better than reply, as Thackeray himself was in the habit of doing, by an illustration. It shall be taken from the works of a great writer who admired Thackeray, and whom Thackeray admired.

Newman in 1843, though still full of doubt and perplexity, was fast nearing the Church of Rome. The *Via media* was crumbling beneath his feet. He had given up preaching at St. Mary's, in Oxford itself, had retired to half-conventual seclusion at Littlemore, within sight of the city he so loved ; and there, driven onwards by relentless logic, had come to the conclusion that he could conscientiously teach the doctrines of Anglicanism no more. On the 25th of September he ascended the pulpit of the little church to preach his last sermon. It bears the significant title of "The Parting of Friends." He began simply, touched upon the various partings described in the Bible, finally quoting our Lord's cry of infinite pathos, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee!" So far there was nothing unusual in the discourse. It consisted for the most part of texts of Scripture. But at this point there came for a moment a deepening of the tone, and a passage, slightly ambiguous in form, though strongly marked, which might apply to Jerusalem or to the Church of England. Not, however, till the very

end did the pent-up feeling of the situation find full expression :—

"And O, my brethren, O kind and affectionate hearts, O loving friends, should you know any one whose lot it has been, by writing or by word of mouth, in some degree to help you thus to act; if he has ever told you what you know about yourselves, or what you did not know; has read to you your wants and feelings, and comforted you by the very reading: has made you feel that there was a higher life than this daily one, and a brighter world than that you see; or encouraged you, or sobered you, or opened a way to the inquiring, or soothed the perplexed; if what he has ever said or done has ever made you take interest in him, and feel well inclined towards him; remember such a one in time to come, though you hear him not, and pray for him that in all things he may know God's will, and at all times be made ready to fulfil it."

As he spoke, so we are told, many of his hearers wept, remembering all that Newman had been to them, and foreseeing that in future battles his flashing sword would be on their side no more.

Now the point to which I particularly wish to draw attention is the restraint shown in such a sermon. Try to realize the position. The man had been the leader in a great movement. The doubts which were leading him to break with a loved past touched the very deepest interests of his being. To most of us the spiritual and intellectual part of life is little, as compared with the material part. To him it was the one thing of supreme import. And here was he unloosed from his old moorings, from the shore that was the home of his heart, the home of all those he loved, and drifting he knew not whither. The wrench must have been terrible. Think for a moment how an

emotional writer or speaker would have expressed himself on such an occasion—with what passion of regret, what eloquence of self-justification, what tearfulness of farewells. Newman condenses his feeling into one paragraph, or, at most, two, and there gives it expression in language tense indeed and vibrating with emotion, like the string of a violin beneath the finger of a master, but with an emotion chastened and restrained.

In this chastening and restraint dwells, as I take it, the classical spirit. They were the special "note" of the great writers of Queen Anne's day—of the serene Addison, of Steele, of Bolingbroke, of Gay, of Congreve, —even of Swift, whose native energy and savagery must have found it hard to keep within the bounds which the time perscribed. They distinguished such later writers as Sterne and Goldsmith. All these men wrote habitually for "The Town," for a limited and educated public, and foreswore coarse effects—I mean here intellectually coarse—as unsuited to those whom they addressed. What they cultivated was measure rather than force, felicity and neatness rather than eloquence, good sense rather than imagination, sensibility rather than passion. They worked, to put it shortly, within a restricted sphere, excluding from their view many of the elements, even the nobler elements, of humanity; but the work they turned out was, from its very limitation perhaps, all the more perfect.

And Thackeray worked in the same spirit. The public he addressed was the educated public. The men and women he described were, for the most part, the men and women of the upper classes, either in the past

or the present. He kept generally in the middle way between heroism and criminality. He made no harrowing appeals to the feelings. From inflated language—such language, for instance, as Dickens used when describing the death of Little Nell—he invariably kept free; it was quite foreign to his nature. His diction was always unstrained, simple, and exquisitely pure and felicitous. And it is curious to note how many of the characteristics of the earlier writers of the eighteenth century he possessed. Like them, he cared little, so it is said, for the beauties of external nature, that passion of our own day. Like them, too, he dealt much with the smaller social questions, leaving the larger problems almost untouched. Like most of them, he troubled himself not at all with abstract speculation. It is significant, too, how little he cared, if one may judge from his writings, for the great Romantic poets of the beginning of this century, Shelley, Keats, Byron, Wordsworth, and Coleridge. When he wanted to spend a happy morning with his daughter he read Goldsmith's "Deserted Village," not the works of these later men. He was, in short, a classic, the great English classic of our century, the brother of the great classics that were of old, and, as such, when he came to write a novel dealing with the days of Anne, he produced a masterpiece.

The story of "Esmond" I shall not attempt to retell. Indeed, it is difficult to tell any of Thackeray's stories. They have but little plot, being in that respect like real life, where incident follows incident, and the grand definite points are few and far between. But, in default of one great over-mastering plot, there are a multitude of

little plots—of scenes so arranged as to illustrate character and its development—and of superb separate chapters. The story of Henry Esmond's childhood and youth at Castlewood is beautifully told. One seems to see it all: the old hall; the languid third viscount—yet not so languid but he can, on the occasion of a riot, trip up the "great big saddler's apprentice" for throwing a potato at young Henry—and the third viscount's bedizened wife; then the troopers, and Steele, the Christian hero, a somewhat besmirched saint, it must be owned; and afterwards the new viscount, easy-going, good-natured, fond of his glass and his ease, a handsome, if somewhat prematurely coarse figure; and by his side, loved while her first beauty lasts, the gracious young Lady Castlewood; there is little Trix, too, the born coquette, the enslaver of man from the cradle upwards. I declare if one were suddenly, by some stroke of magic, carried back two hundred years, and placed among all these people, one would scarcely feel strange, so real, so familiar do they appear. Who has not seen in thought that home-coming of Henry after his first campaign, and heard Lady Castlewood's voice as she cries :—

"Do you know what day it is? . . . It is the 29th of December —it is your birthday! But last year we did not drink it—no, no. My lord was cold, and my Harry was like to die: and my brain was in a fever; and we had no wine. But now, now you are come again, bringing your sheaves with you, my dear.' She burst into a wild flood of weeping as she spoke: she laughed and sobbed on the young man's heart, crying out wildly, 'bringing your sheaves with you—your sheaves with you!'"

Few pages in fiction, again, are more quietly beautiful

than that describing Esmond's visit to his mother's grave in the convent cemetery at Brussels. The character of the hero, too, is among the finest, as it is certainly the most heroic, that Thackeray ever drew.

Yet this superb book seems to have received scant recognition at the time. "It fell still-born from the press," if we are to believe Mr. Edmund Yates. Miss Mitford said it was "painful, and unpleasant, and false," and "tedious and long." Even staunch Charlotte Brontë thought it contained "too much history, and too little story." George Eliot, writing in November, 1852, said to her correspondent, it "is the most uncomfortable book you can imagine."—And there are some of us to whom "Romola" appears so laboured!

"Esmond" being completed, Thackeray bethought himself of acquiring "dollars," "not for himself, but for his little girls at home," by delivering the Lectures on the Humourists in the United States. He seems already to have contemplated this step a year before, for on August 25, 1851, Carlyle wrote to Emerson: "Item. Thackeray is coming over to lecture to you: A mad world, my masters"—though why mad on this particular account, it is difficult to say. And now, on August 10, 1852, Fitzgerald writes, "Dear old Thackeray is really going to America"; and on the 27th of October, Thackeray writes to Fitzgerald:—

"My dear old friend, I mustn't go away without shaking your hand, and saying farewell and God bless you. . . . I should like my daughters to remember you are the best and oldest friend their father ever had, and that you would act as such: as my literary executor and so forth. My books would yield a something as copy-

rights; and should anything occur, I have commissioned friends in good place to get a pension for my poor little wife. . . . Does not this sound gloomily? Well, who knows what fate is in store? and I feel not at all downcast, but very grave and solemn at the brink of a great voyage. . . . The great comfort I have in thinking about my dear old boy is that recollection of our youth when we loved each other, as I do now, when I write farewell. . . . I sail on Saturday morning, by the *Canada*, for Boston"—

the Saturday being, I take it, the 30th of October.

So he sailed, with Arthur Hugh Clough and Mr. Lowell for fellow-passengers,[1] and reached Boston on a frosty November evening. He was glad to be on dry land once more, though "the passage is nothing now it is over," he wrote to Mrs. Brookfield; and took up his quarters at Tremont House, which had been taken for him, and where a pleasant party met the same evening to discuss the hugest of oysters and other local dainties. "All the necessary arrangements for his lecturing had been made without troubling him with any of the details," says Fields, who had apparently been the first to suggest his going to America at all, and he set himself to enjoy his novel experiences thoroughly. Nothing can be in greater contrast than his opinions on America and American society, and those which Dickens had formed some ten years earlier. Probably there was some change in the people themselves—Dickens, as we know, found a great change when he visited the place in 1867–68,—but unmistakably there was a great difference in the glasses through which the people were regarded. "I have made scores of new acquaintances, and lighted on my

[1] See Mr. Waddington's memoir of Clough.

legs as usual," he writes to Mrs. Brookfield from New York on the 23rd of December.

"I didn't expect to like the people as I do, but am agreeably disappointed, and find many most pleasant companions, natural and good; natural and well read, and well bred too; and I suppose am none the worse pleased because everybody has read all my books and praises my lectures. . . . Nobody is quiet here, no more am I. The rush and restlessness pleases me, and I like, for a little, the dash of the stream. I am not received as a god, which I like too."

Again he writes from Baltimore on the 7th of February:—

"Now I have seen three great cities, Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. I think I like them all mighty well. They seem to me not so civilised as our London, but more so than Manchester and Liverpool. At Boston is very good literate company indeed; it is like Edinburgh for that—a vast amount of Toryism and donnishness everywhere. That of New York the simplest and least pretentious; it suffices that a man should keep a fine house, give parties, and have a daughter, to get all the world to him. And what struck me, that whereas on my first arrival, I was annoyed at the uncommon splendatiousness. . . . "

Here the letter breaks off in all kindliness. And again, when Mr. William B. Reed, of Philadelphia, asked him to say candidly what were his impressions of America, he answered:—

"You know what a virtue-proud people we English are. We think we have got it all to ourselves. Now that which most impresses me here is that I find homes as pure as ours, firesides like ours, domestic virtues as gentle; the English language, though the accent be a little different, with its home-like melody; and the Common Prayer Book in your families. I am more struck by pleasant resemblances than by anything else."

"And so," adds Mr. Reed, "I sincerely believe he was."[1]

Of course there were little occasional shadows in the general brightness. Thus he writes to Mrs. Brookfield from Philadelphia on the 21st of January:—

"Does this melancholy come from the circumstance that I have been out to dinner and supper every night this week? O! I am tired of shaking hands with people, and acting the lion business night after night. Everybody is introduced and shakes hands. I know thousands of colonels, professors, editors, and what-not, and walk the streets guiltily, knowing that I don't know 'em, and trembling lest the man opposite to me is one of my friends of the day before.

But even this little grumble ends cheerfully: "I believe I am popular, except at Boston among the newspaper men, who fired into me, but a great favourite with the *monde* there and elsewhere. Here in Philadelphia it is all praise and kindness." Everything seems to have gone well during this visit to our Transatlantic cousins. Thackeray was at his best and happiest. Every glimpse we get of him is pleasant. Now he is prattling to Mr. Reed's children, telling them odd fairy stories, walking with one of the little things holding his hand in the street—"the tall, gray-haired, spectacled man with an effort accommodating himself to the toddling child by his side";[2]—now helping to give them their dinner; now

[1] "Haud Immemor—Thackeray in America," *Blackwood*, June, 1872.

[2] Mr. Reed's language is a little ambiguous. This may have happened during the second American tour.

he is striving, very good-naturedly—for he was not a brilliant general talker—to entertain a large company, and not let them think they have met the great Thackeray in vain; and now, in the exuberance of his good spirits at the success of his lectures, his "jollity" knows no bounds, and has to be repressed: "I well remember," says Fields—

"his uproarious shouting and dancing when he was told that the tickets to the first course of lectures were all sold; and when we rode together from his hotel to the lecture-hall he insisted on thrusting both his long legs out of the carriage window, in deference, as he said, to his magnanimous ticket-holders."

"By Jove, how kind you all were to me," he wrote to Mr. Reed afterwards from this side of the Atlantic.

Thackeray during his tour in the United States visited Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Richmond, and, I think, Charlestown—probably other places. What he made by his lectures has not transpired. He himself, in one of his letters, speaks of the possible gains as £2,500, and this may be near the mark. Then he turned his face homewards, still fairly early in 1853—turned his face towards the attractions he had enumerated when Mr. Reed urged him to try for the vacant Consulate at Washington—towards "the familiar London flagstones, and the library at the Athenæum, and the ride in the park, and the pleasant society afterwards."

Three weeks of London seem, however, to have been enough for him on this occasion, and then a month in Paris—as I gather—and then, by about the middle of

July, he is at Baden with his daughters, and "has set intrepidly to work again," and is writing "The Newcomes." [1] This, like "Vanity Fair," "Pendennis," and "Esmond," is one of his very great novels; the others, great as they are in parts, falling somewhat into the background. The first number was published in October, 1853, and the last in August, 1855.

But, here again, how analyze a plot, when there is no plot? "Story, God bless you, I have none to tell, sir," said the "Needy Knife-grinder"; and though one is not quite in that position with regard to "The Newcomes," for there *is* a story, yet it is a story so meandering, so little constructed in view of a definite climax, that it defies all attempts at an epitome. If there be a leading thread at all, it is that of Clive Newcome's love for his beautiful cousin Ethel;—and they do come together at last, after he has been married to a woman whom he does not love, and Ethel has gone through the experiences of a fashionable beauty—so that their "living happy ever afterwards" is of a chastened kind. "O worldlings," the preacher seems to say, "O votaries of society, how empty are the objects for which you agonize. True love, gentleness, kindliness, are these not better than social distinction? What is rank that you should care for it thus?" Such is the sermon; and among the congregation to whom it is preached—some of whom need it very much, and some very little—what notable and striking figures! Who knows not Clive's mother-in-law, the terrible "Campaigner"? and Florac, the vivacious, the irresistible—a true gentleman with all his

[1] He told Mr. Reed he was to get $20,000 for it—say £4,000.

absurdities—greatest of Frenchmen in English fiction? and that odious little Sir Barnes, and Clive, and the saintly Madame de Florac with her beautiful old face, and Colonel Newcome himself, the *preux chevalier*? Is there a much more pathetic figure in fiction than this last? I do not merely mean in his ruin—the man of stainless honour amidst all the wreckage and moral pollution of a great failure—or even in his death;—I mean in much earlier days, when he feels that the son he loves so passionately is living apart from him, not through any fault in the young man, but simply because he *is* a young man, and no two generations think quite alike. There must be many fathers who have felt the pathos of the story, how the Colonel

"went away privily, and worked at the National Gallery with a catalogue, and passed hours in the Museum before the ancient statues, desperately praying to comprehend them, and puzzled before them. . . . Whereas when Clive came to look at these same things, his eyes would lighten up with pleasure, and his cheeks flush with enthusiasm. He seemed to drink in colour as he would a feast of wine. Before the statues he would wave his finger, following the line of grace, and burst into ejaculations of delight and admiration. 'Why can't I love the things which he loves?' thought Newcome. . . . Together they were, yet he was alone still. His thoughts were not the boy's, and his affections rewarded with but a part of the young man's heart. . . . As the young man grew, it seemed to the father as if each day separated them more and more."

And the description of the Colonel's end—sure there is no death-scene in fiction excelling it in beautiful simplicity:—

"At the usual evening hour the chapel bell began to toll, and Thomas Newcome's hands outside the bed feebly beat time. And

just as the last bell struck a peculiar sweet smile shone over his face, and he lifted up his head a little, and quickly said 'Adsum!' and fell back. It was the word we used at school when names were called; and, so, he whose heart was as that of a little child, had answered to his name and stood in the presence of the Master!"

"The Newcomes" ended, Thackeray turned his thoughts westward once more, and determined to make another visit to the United States. He would lecture again, and get a new supply of dollars; and this time his subject would be the "Four Georges," and the lectures would not be first delivered in this country, but presented in their newest bloom to the American public. On the 6th of September, 1855, he wrote to Mr. Hodder[1] from (36) Onslow Square, whither he had moved in 1853 from Young Street, Kensington, asking that gentleman to come and act as his amanuensis and secretary. Forthwith they set to work. Mr. Hodder would arrive quite early in the morning, and generally find Thackeray up and ready. Then the great man, restless, uneasy, often changing his attitude, taking an occasional whiff at a cigar, would dictate slowly, distinctly, weighing well his words, and never suffering a smile to ripple over his face even at the best and most humorous of his points. He was to start on the 13th of October, and, on the 11th, his friends, sixty in number, gave him a dinner at the London Tavern, Dickens occupying the chair. "Neither of the two principal speeches was very felicitous," says Sir F. Pollock, who was present on the occasion. But another chronicler records that "Dickens, the best after-dinner speaker now alive, was never happier," and that

[1] "Memories of My Time," by George Hodder.

"Thackeray, who is far from what is called a good speaker, outdid himself." So one is a little puzzled, especially as the speeches were not reported. Then, on the morning of the 13th, there was a tearful parting with his daughters, Thackeray burying his face in his hands as the carriage rolled away to the station, and it was Westward Ho! once more.

Of this visit to America there is no continuous record; but the glimpses are all delightful. On the 16th of November Bayard Taylor writes from New York: "I have met Thackeray and like him very much. He likes me too." And, in December, the same authority says that he had given a breakfast to Thackeray and other friends at Delmonico's: "We had a glorious time; the breakfast lasted five hours." On the 7th of the same month Longfellow notes that he had gone to hear the lecture on George I., had "found a crowded audience, and had to take a back seat"; and on the 8th he notes further that Thackeray had been out to supper at his house, as also Ole Bull, the great violinist, and that there had been music. On St. Valentine's Day Thackeray himself writes from Savannah, Georgia, to Miss Perry in England, asking her, among other things, to visit his "good cook and housekeeper Gray," "all alone in poor 36 yonder," and tell her he is "very well, and making plenty of money, and that Charles [his valet] is well, and is the greatest comfort." The fond father adds: "What charming letters Annie writes me, with exquisite pretty turns now and then. St. Valentine brought me a delightful letter from her too, and from the dear old mother, and whether it's the comfort of this

house, or the pleasure of having an hour's chat with you, or the sweet clean bed I had last night, and undisturbed rest and good breakfast—altogether I think I have no right to grumble at my lot, and am very decently happy—don't you?" And on the 7th of April Bayard Taylor writes again from New York: "Thackeray came here on Saturday. . . . He looks jolly and rosy, although he had a few chills on the Mississippi. He is staying with Robinson, 64, Houston Street. It is refreshing to see his good face and big body among us once more."

The lectures on the Georges were even more successful than the lectures on the Humourists three years before. Whether the subject was particularly well chosen has been questioned. Thackeray at the time, and afterwards, received a good deal of blame on the ground that there was something disloyal and anti-patriotic in exposing the weaknesses, meannesses, peccadilloes of English kings before an American audience. But, after all, the Georges are historical personages, and one may fairly speak one's mind about them in all companies. They are not of our day. If it pleases the Americans to think evil of them no one will be greatly hurt. Admirably brilliant as these lectures are, however, I don't know that the impression they leave is quite just. "Farmer George" may not have been a man of very brilliant parts, but he was scarcely the dullard that the Whig and Radical tradition would have us think. And, dullard or the reverse, he alone of the monarchs of Europe brought his country triumphantly through the great crisis of the end of the last century and the beginning of this. While as to George IV.—Thackeray's

pet aversion of many years' standing—even of him it is always right to remember that his claim to be the first gentleman in Europe was acknowledged by such an undeniable gentleman as Sir Walter Scott.

Still the lectures were a success—and how beautiful they are! What an admirable pathos and eloquence in the passages relating to George III.'s madness—doubtless a topic on which Thackeray felt keenly—and how brilliant throughout! But when, towards the end of his tour, an enterprising young bookseller of Philadelphia induced him to give once more the series of lectures on the Humourists—then there was failure. It was too late in the season, says Mr. Reed, and the bargain proved disastrous to the impresario. Thackeray took the matter good-humouredly enough, so far as he himself was concerned. "I don't mind the empty benches," he would say, "but I cannot bear to see that sad, pale-faced young man as I come out, who is losing money on my account." Mark, however, the issue. "The bargain had been fairly made, and honourably complied with; and the money was paid and remitted through my agency (Mr. Reed is writing) . . . to him at New York. I received no acknowledgment of the remittance, and recollect well that I felt not a little annoyed at this; the more so when, on picking up a newspaper, I learned that Thackeray had sailed for home. The day after he had gone, when there could be no refusal, I received a certificate of deposit on his New York bankers for an amount quite sufficient to meet any loss incurred, as he thought, on his behalf."

One more extract, from the reminiscences of Mr.

Lester Wallack,[1] the well-known actor, shall bring the story of this American tour to an end :—

"I thought him with his great height, his spectacles, which gave him a very pedantic appearance, and his chin carried in the air, the most pompous, supercilious person I had ever met; but I lived to alter that opinion, and in a very short time. . . . Thackeray then lived with a very great and dear friend of mine and my father's, and they had rooms together in Houston Street. I had a house next door but one to them, and this is how I became so intimate with Thackeray. . , . Thackeray, I suppose, took a fancy to me; at any rate it was understood every night, when I came home from acting, that if I saw a light in a certain window, I was to go in. . . . When I did find them in we never parted until half-past two or three in the morning. Then was the time to see Thackeray at his best, because then he was like a boy. He did not attempt to be the genius of the party. . . Such an unsophisticated gentle creature as he was. . . . On one occasion there was to be a dinner-party of four. Thackeray said it might probably be the last time he should meet us convivially during this visit, so we agreed to dine together with him. . . . After waiting a long time for Thackeray, at last there came a ring at the bell, and the waiter brought up a large parcel, and a note from him to say that a letter he had received compelled him to pack up as quickly as possible, and start for England by the first steamer; and he added, 'by the time you receive this, dear William, I shall be almost out of the harbour. Let me wish you a pleasant evening with the Wallacks, and let me ask you to accept this little gift, as a remembrance of the many, many pleasant days and nights we have passed together.' The gift was a beautiful silver vase. I never saw Thackeray again; but our short and intimate association is one of the most delightful reminiscences of my life."

Bayard Taylor, writing on the 20th of April, says: "Thackeray went off in the *Baltic* on Saturday, running off from his friends for fear of having to say good-bye.

[1] "Memories of Fifty Years."

I saw him off. He seemed sorry to leave." And so the second American lecturing tour was a thing of the past.

After Thackeray's return he determined to deliver the lectures on the Georges in England. They had paid, and paid well, in America; why should they not do the same on this side of the Atlantic? Through the agency of the useful Mr. Hodder, an arrangement was made with Mr. Beale, of the firm of Cramer and Beale, by which Thackeray undertook to deliver the lectures a certain number of times in London, and in various provincial towns—Exeter, Plymouth, Clifton, Birmingham, Oxford, Leamington, Norwich, being the principal—and Mr. Beale, on the other hand, undertook to pay fifty guineas—"decidedly guineas," not pounds, the great man had stipulated—for each lecture, or a certain reduced amount when more than two lectures were delivered in the same town. With these terms Thackeray was well pleased. "Fifty guineas a night!" he exclaimed, "Why I shouldn't have received one-half that sum for an article in *Fraser* a few years ago." His reception by the undergraduate audience at Oxford gratified him much.

"The manner in which they not only 'took,' but almost anticipated every flash of wit or humour as it came from the lips of the reader, gave him infinite satisfaction; and when the task was ended he said to [Mr. Hodder] in the ante-room, 'There's an audience for you! Gad, I would lecture to those young fellows for nothing!' Indeed so pleased was he with the enthusiasm they expressed, that he admitted many of them to a personal interview with him in his private room, and thanked them earnestly for the hearty encouragement they had given him." [1]

[1] Hodder's "Memories of my Time."

And in Scotland, whither he went later, in the autumn of the year—and where he was a great popular favourite—he was also much gratified with his reception. "I have had three per cent. of the whole population here," he wrote from Edinburgh in November. "If I could but get three per cent. of London!"

CHAPTER XI.

(By Frank T. Marzials.)

IN July, 1857, there came an attempt at a new departure in Thackeray's life. Writing from Philadelphia, in melancholy mood, some years earlier, he had spoken of the things that still might interest him, literature, as he declared for the nonce, having ceased to possess any charm. "There's money-making to try at, to be sure," he had said, "and ambition—I mean in public life; perhaps that might interest a man." And now, in 1857, he made a serious effort to enter Parliament.

The City of Oxford was the constituency he wooed and attempted to win. That constituency had just lost its representative, Mr. Neate, professor of Political Economy, and a well-known university figure, who had been unseated for what Thackeray called "a twopenny-worth of bribery which he never committed;" and Thackeray was put forward to replace him. Of course he stood in the Liberal interest. He belonged to a Liberal generation, to the generation whose aspirations found an echo in "Locksley Hall"; and he never

lived long enough to know the disenchantment of "Sixty years after." So he declared himself to be an advocate of the ballot; and of an extension of the suffrage, though not of universal suffrage; and he desired to see places of power and influence more freely given to men of ability instead of men of rank; and he would not object to triennial parliaments if the people really wished for them, though personally he had little belief in the latter panacea for the ills of mankind. Altogether his speeches, if displaying no very profound political philosophy—for which indeed there was no occasion—are very distinctly creditable. On the hustings he had modestly said: "I only hope, if you elect me to Parliament, I shall be able to obviate the little difficulty which has been placarded against me—that I could not speak. I own I cannot speak very well, but I shall learn. I cannot spin out glib sentences by the yard, as some people can; but if I have got anything on my mind, if I feel strongly on any question, I have, I believe, got brains enough to express it." But throughout this campaign he had clearly done much to conquer his constitutional timidity.

He was beaten when it came to the poll. On the 21st of July the numbers stood: Cardwell, 1085; Thackeray, 1018. But if ever candidate could say that though beaten he was not disgraced, I think it was Thackeray after this defeat. The battle had been fought in all courtesy, and by a gentleman. I wish I had space to quote every word of the speech he made after the declaration of the poll. It is a model of good taste and right feeling:—

"You have fought the battle gallantly," he told his supporters, "against great influences, against an immense strength which have been brought against you, and in favour of that honoured and respected man Mr. Cardwell (*Some hisses*). Stop! don't hiss. When Lord Monck came down here and addressed the electors, he was good enough to say a kind word in favour of me. Now that being the case, don't let me be outdone in courtesy and generosity. . . . Perhaps I thought my name was better known than it is. You, the electors of Oxford, know whether I have acted honestly towards you; and you, on the other side, will say whether I ever solicited a vote when I knew that vote was promised to my opponent; or whether I have not always said, 'Sir, keep your word; here is my hand on it; let us part good friends.' With my opponents I part so. . . . (Then came a cry of "Bribery!") Don't cry out bribery: if you know it, prove it; but as I am innocent of bribery myself, I do not choose to fancy that other men are not equally loyal and honest. . . . I will retire, and take my place with my pen and ink at my desk, and leave to Mr. Cardwell a business which I am sure he understands better than I do."

Brave words, good words, and true words. Thackeray was far better at his desk. There is no reason to suppose that he had the gifts to make a particularly good politician or statesman—any more than he would have made a particularly good official or police magistrate, which had been his ambition some years earlier. He was a superb writer, with an absolutely imperial command over the English language, and any energy diverted from his art would have been the world's loss. While as to Mr., afterwards Lord, Cardwell, he was an administrator of the first rank among English administrators. He left his mark at the Colonial Office; he left it in strong, ineffaceable lines at the War Office. Distinctly he under stood that business better than Thackeray.

So Thackeray went back to his desk, and began a new

serial story, "The Virginians," which appeared in monthly parts from November, 1857, to October, 1859. This book is, as it were, a kind of link between "Esmond" and the books dealing with our own time, "Pendennis," "The Newcomes," and "Philip"—for the two Virginians, Henry and George Warrington, are the grandsons of Colonel Esmond, and the ancestors of the George Warrington who figures in the later novels. Such a connection was very characteristic of Thackeray. Like Balzac, like Anthony Trollope, like M. Zola—though not with M. Zola's pseudo-scientific purpose of showing the influences of heredity—he was fond of making the same personages figure in more than one novel; and where this could not be, because the novels related to different periods of history, he liked to establish a kind of ancestral connection. Thus he told Motley in May, 1858, while "The Virginians" was in progress, that "he intended to write a novel of the time of Henry V., which would be his *capo d'opera*, in which the ancestors of all his present characters, Warringtons, Pendennises, and the rest should be introduced. It would be a most magnificent performance, he said, and nobody would read it." This purpose, as we know, even if ever very seriously entertained, was never fulfilled. The *capo d'opera* remained in dreamland, "Esmond" occupies its place. But the very conception is large and imposing. It shows a sense of the continuity of human life. While, as to the reappearance of the novelist's characters in book after book, it undeniably gives to his world an air of reality. Even the least credulous can scarce doubt of the existence of persons met so often, and in such different companies.

"The Virginians," Thackeray told Motley, "was devilish stupid, but at the same time most admirable"; and the criticism, paradoxical as it may seem, possesses an element of truth. "Devilish stupid" the book, of course, is not. But it is thoroughly ill "composed," to borrow the art critic's term. The first half and the second half scarcely hang together; the interest is divided, somewhat clumsily, between the two brothers—and I, for one, confess to be very sorry when George comes to life again, and is installed as hero *vice* Henry deposed. But, with all drawbacks, the hand of the great master is there, in the matchless style, the admirable scenes, the excellent delineations of character, the exact reproduction of the life of the last century. All this is on the "most admirable" side.

Motley saw Thackeray several times while "The Virginians" was in progress, and was very hospitably entertained by him, and on the 28th of May, 1858, gives this description of his appearance:—

"I believe you have never seen Thackeray [Motley is writing to his wife]; he has the appearance of a colossal infant, smooth, white, shiny, ringletty hair, flaxen, alas! with advancing years, a roundish face, with a little dab of a nose, upon which it is a perpetual wonder how he keeps his spectacles, a sweet but rather piping voice, with something of the childish treble about it, and a very tall slightly stooping figure—such are the characteristics of the great snob of England. His manner is like that of everybody else in England—nothing original, all planed down into perfect uniformity with that of his fellow-creatures. There was not much more distinction in his talk than in his white choker, or black coat and waistcoat."[1]

[1] Motley's Correspondence.

And now, in the June of this same year 1858, one comes to an incident which may cause something like a pang to those who love and admire both Thackeray and Dickens. Mr. Edmund Yates, then editing a periodical called *Town Talk*, bethought himself, in an evil moment, and when under the immediate necessity of producing "copy," to write an article on "Mr. W. M. Thackeray." The article opened with a description of Thackeray's appearance, a description which, though not flattering, might probably have been borne with equanimity. But the writer then went on to say :—

"No one meeting him could fail to recognize in him a gentleman; his bearing is cold and uninviting, his style of conversation either openly cynical or affectedly good-natured and benevolent; his *bonhomie* is forced, his wit biting, his pride easily touched. . . . His success, commencing with 'Vanity Fair,' culminated with his 'Lectures on the Humourists' . . . which were attended by all the court and fashion of London. The prices were extravagant, the lecturer's adulation of birth and position was extravagant, the success was extravagant. No one succeeds better than Mr. Thackeray in cutting his coat according to his cloth. Here he flattered the aristocracy; but when he crossed the Atlantic George Washington became the idol of his worship, the 'Four Georges' the objects of his bitterest attacks. These last-named lectures have been dead failures in England, though as literary compositions they are most excellent. Our own opinion is that his success is on the wane. . . . There is a want of heart in all he writes, which is not balanced by the most brilliant sarcasm and the most perfect knowledge of the human heart." [1]

Of this article it is needless to speak in stronger

[1] The full text of the article, which is very short, is given in Mr. Yates's "Recollections and Experiences.' There seems to have been an earlier article dealing with Thackeray's relations to his publishers.

language than that used by Mr. Yates himself. Even at the time he made no attempt to defend it; and, writing years afterwards, he says that "no one can see more clearly than" he does its "silliness and bad taste." But, granting to the full that the article was a peccant article, I fear it must be owned, even by Thackeray's admirers, that the punishments inflicted on the writer was disproportionate, and, which is worse, not of an altogether right kind. Several courses were open to Thackeray when Mr. Yates's animadversions were brought to his notice. He might—and this, I take it, was the right course—have shrugged his large shoulders, and let the matter go by, remembering that he also, in younger days, had said sharp and personal things of his contemporaries, and had done so in periodicals more important than *Town Talk*. He might have appealed to Mr. Yates's better feeling, and asked whether the terms used were quite those in which a recruit ought to speak of a white-haired veteran. He might, if his combative feelings were irrepressible, have inflicted such literary castigation on the offender as he had, in the "Essay on Thunder and Small Beer," inflicted on *The Times* critic who had foolishly fallen foul of the "Kickleburys on the Rhine."

The last, if bent on battle, was, I venture to think, his right course. Unfortunately he did not take it. He first, on the 14th of June, 1858, wrote a fierce letter to Mr. Yates, a letter so couched as certainly not to facilitate apology or retraction. Mr. Yates appealed for advice to Dickens, and the impression produced at the time seems certainly to have been that Dickens con-

ducted the controversy from this point in a spirit hostile to Thackeray. Be that as it may, Thackeray next took the unusual course of appealing to the committee of the Garrick Club, on the plea that he had only met Mr. Yates at the Club, and that it was for the Club to protect him against Mr. Yates's insults. This, with all admiration for Thackeray, was scarcely, I think, *de bonne guerre*. The case was hardly one on which the Club ought to have been called upon to adjudicate; nor, in truth, did Thackeray himself come into court with perfectly clean hands, for he had made some of the members figure in his books, and not to their advantage. However, his influence at the club was paramount. Dickens was a member too, but did not go there very often, while Thackeray was extremely fond of "the G.," "the little G.," "the dearest place in the world," as he affectionately called it, and a constant *habitué*. In July, at a general meeting, resolutions were passed, notwithstanding all that Dickens and Wilkie Collins could urge, which involved the ejection of Mr. Yates from the club unless he made "ample apology." This he refused to do, and he was turned out—a tremendous punishment, it must be owned, to a young fellow of twenty-seven just beginning life.

Of course the sting of Mr. Yates's article was its imputation of bad faith. As Thackeray had said in his first letter to Mr. Yates, on the 14th of June: "As I understand your phrases, you impute insincerity to me when I speak good-naturedly in private, assign dishonourable motives to me for sentiments which I have delivered in public,"—and though Mr. Yates repudiated the meaning

thus attached to his words, yet certainly that looks like their meaning. Still, even so, it is difficult to understand why Thackeray was so ruffled by an article in an obscure paper like *Town Talk.* The explanation given at the time, and very current since, is that the whole affair was an outburst of long-smouldering jealousy between Thackeray and Dickens. Such a surmise must, from its nature, be difficult of proof or disproof.[1] Mr. Yates says "there was no intimacy, nor anything really like friendship between the two men." And this is possibly true, though there are many records of friendly meetings, as at Boulogne in 1854, and at the private theatricals at Tavistock House on the 18th of June, 1855. Dickens was no critic, except where art of a similar kind to his own was concerned, and most likely thought rather meanly of his great rival's works. Thackeray, whose literary culture was far wider, expressed, both in his writings, and also in private correspondence never meant for publication, a very just appreciation of Dickens's magnificent gifts. Peace be to their rivalries now, if so be that there were rivalries. It is pleasant to think that a week before Thackeray's death the estrangement of the last five years came to an end. The two men met on the steps of the Athenæum Club, turned and looked at each other, and Dickens did not refuse the proffered hand of a renewed friendship. Had Thackeray lived I doubt not that with Mr. Yates too there would have been reconciliation.

"The Virginians" came to an end in October, 1859;

[1] "Neither was wholly right, nor was either altogether in the wrong," is the testimony of Forster, Dickens's biographer.

and Thackeray was at once in the thick of the preparations for *The Cornhill Magazine*. Shilling magazines were then a comparatively new departure. *Macmillan's Magazine*, under the editorship of Professor Masson, was just being started, the first number appearing in November, 1859, and now the *Cornhill*, under Thackeray, the great Thackeray, was to be launched by the house of Smith and Elder, and to take the world by storm. How well we oldsters, who were then youngsters, remember the eager anticipations with which the new venture was expected! What a magazine of magazines it was to be! Nor were we disappointed. Thackeray, the procrastinating apprentice, did not, indeed, to begin with, come out in his full force as a novelist. It had been intended that he should start the periodical with one of his great novels. But the time had advanced, and he had not been ready—or only ready with a comparatively unimportant story, "Lovel the Widower," based upon an old play of his. On the 28th of October he had written to Trollope, expressing great admiration for the latter's "Three Clerks," and asking for his co-operation. Trollope had been offered £1,000 for a novel if the first portion could be got ready by the 12th of December, and Trollope, like the good steady mill-horse that he was, had set to work at once and ground out his novel in time—and a very good novel "Framley Parsonage" proved to be. But if Thackeray gave to the first number of *The Cornhill Magazine*, for January, 1860, nothing greater in the way of fiction than Chapter I. of "Lovel the Widower," he gave to it the first of his delightful "Roundabout Papers"—papers that none but he could

have written;—and what between Trollope and Thackeray the world was well satisfied.

In the middle of the preceding month (December, 1859) Thackeray seems to have been assured of the commercial success of the magazine, and to have gone off to Paris, quite "like his old self," as Fields records. "Those days in Paris were simply tremendous," says Fields:—

"We dined at all possible and impossible places together. We walked round and round the glittering courts of the Palais Royal . . . and all my efforts were necessary to restrain him from rushing in and ordering a pocketful of diamonds and 'other trifles,' as he called them; 'for,' said he, 'how can I spend the princely income which Smith allows me for editing the *Cornhill* unless I begin instantly somewhere?' If he saw a group of three or four persons talking together in an excited way . . . he would whisper to me with intense gesticulation: 'There, there, you see the news has reached Paris, and perhaps the number has gone up since my last accounts from London.' His spirits during these few days were colossal, and he told me he found it impossible to sleep for counting his subscribers."[1]

Thackeray, if we are to believe Trollope, was not a good editor; and that he was not a very methodical editor, any more than he was a very methodical writer, may well be believed. But such admirable work is often turned out by the unmethodical! And I confess that Trollope, in his remarks on Thackeray, always reminds me a little of that schoolmaster of whom Charles Lamb says: "Upon my complaining that these little sketches of mine were anything but methodical, and that I was unable

[1] Fields' "Yesterdays with Authors," and "Biographical Notes, &c."

to make them otherwise, (he) kindly undertook to instruct me in the method by which young gentlemen in *his* seminary were taught to compose English themes." Though Thackeray may not have been very regular in the discharge of his editorial duties, and though they certainly were irksome to him,[1] yet he succeeded, during the months of his editorship, in producing a very excellent periodical. If the "Thorns in the Cushion" did torment him sometimes, as he so gracefully describes in the "Roundabout Paper" bearing that title,—if the poor governess would send him her unsuitable contribution with the pathetic appeal to his kindness—and the "envelope with its penny stamp—Heaven help us!"—if the postman's knock became an actual torment through the frequency of such appeals—why, after all, he was the sufferer, not the public who bought the magazine. The unsuitable contributions were rejected, however, sadly.

"Lovel the Widower" appeared in the *Cornhill* from January to June, 1860; and is scarcely, I venture to think, for Thackeray, a very good story. It is not merely that the characters are unsympathetic; but they are—which is much worse—uninteresting. Lovel himself is little more than a shadow. The heroine, who is engaged to the local medical practitioner, half engaged to the narrator of the tale, Mr. Batchelor, loved by the butler, and, with no breathing space at all, re-engaged to Lovel—is a riddle. Nor can one even praise her skill, for there was surely want of generalship in allowing all these loves to come to a head simultaneously. She should

[1] See Mr. Payn's "Some Literary Recollections."

have done like Napoleon and beaten her enemies, her natural enemies, piecemeal. The reader feels that she had not really earned Lovel's hand—and wealth.

The story is an amplification of a play, "The Wolves and the Lamb," which Thackeray had written in 1854; it is premised, and offered to Alfred Wigan, and Buckstone, for the Olympic or Haymarket Theatres. The two managers, notwithstanding the author's great name, had rejected the play; and as one reads it one can but see that they did right. For though the piece is simpler than the story, and the character of the heroine made more comprehensible, yet, even thus, the directness of effect essential to stage representation is not attained. And then there is no action, no movement. Thackeray in fact, with all his intense love for the stage,[1] had apparently no dramatic gift. Twice, and twice only, was the "Wolves and the Lamb" produced, and that

[1] There is a French melodrama, "The Abbaye de Pemarch," by "M.M. de Tournenine and Thackeray," which was produced on the 1st of February, 1840, at the theatre of the Porte St. Antoine, Paris, and is ascribed to Thackeray in an American translation of the play, in the British Museum Catalogue, and in Mr. Shepherd's Bibliography of 1880—but dropped out of his later Bibliography. The play is founded, as regards the main incident, on Southey's ballad, "Mary the Maid of the Inn," and bears no trace, that I can see, of Thackeray's workmanship. It is, I imagine, the work of another member of the Thackeray family, whose name goes darkling in the dramatic literature of the Thirties and Forties. The play seems to have run, in an intermittent sort of way, for about three weeks, so far as I can judge by the advertisements and press notices, and to have excited no particular amount of attention.

As this goes to the press, it is announced that a dramatized version of Thackeray's "The Rose and the Ring" is to be produced at the Prince of Wales' Theatre.

was by an amateur company, and in his new house in Palace Green. Here is the play-bill before me, headed, "W. Empty House Theatricals." But Mr. Merivale, who was present, and not only took parts in the play and the farce afterwards, but held office as "acting manager," shall describe the occasion :—

"Thackeray declined a 'speaking part' on the ground that he couldn't possibly learn such poor words, and only appeared as the clerical papa, just before the fall of the curtain, to hold out his hands and say, 'Bless you, my children,' in pantomime, to actors and audience. And a pretty, gracious, memorable sight, and a sound of much applause, and no little tearfulness it was, when Thackeray so came forward to welcome his friends and guests, for the first time, to the new house he had just built himself on Palace Green. I said it was a house-warming, and the place was still unfurnished except for the occasion. Hence the 'W. Empty House,' which has probably puzzled my readers even more than it puzzled the company. Of all things Thackeray loved a pun—and the worse it was the better he loved it. He drew up his play-bill himself, and two things he insisted on . . . and secondly that 'W. Empty House' must head the bill. Humbly I tried to persuade the great man that the joke was unworthy of him; but he insisted that it was very much wittier than anything in the play, and he would have it. W. M. T. were his initials, that is all. Dear old kindly child!" [1]

"Lovel the Widower" was followed by "The Adventures of Philip on his way through the World," of which the first instalment was published in *The Cornhill Magazine*, for January, 1861, and the last in the number for August, 1862. I shall not dwell on the book. With admirable scenes and passages, as there are in all that Thackeray ever wrote, with the beautiful character of the "Little Sister" coming back to us out of the far-off

[1] *Temple Bar*, June, 1888.

"Shabby-Genteel Story"[1]—with all this, the book is not one of Thackeray's successes. As in "Lovel," so here there seems a want of grasp. The discursiveness, the tendency to sermonize, to lose the thread of the narrative —these faults, of which the germs existed in his earlier works, are now intensified. There is a kind of feeling of lassitude in the writer. To say that he was "worked out" would be untrue. In the fragment of "Dennis Duval," left unfinished at his death, there is the old freshness and power. Rye, the picturesque red-roofed island in the Romney Marsh levels, and neighbouring Winchelsea—these, in his narrative, are peopled again with their old motley population of smugglers and Huguenot refugees, Roman Catholic squires and gentlemen of the King's Navy. The hand that described the death of the Princess Olivia in "Barry Lyndon," or Lady Castlewood's declaration of Esmond's legitimacy in "Esmond," or Lord Castlewood's account of Henry Warrington's interview with Lady Maria in "The Virginians," had not lost its cunning when it came to write of poor Madame de Saverne's sorrows, and madness, and death.

One incident connected with "Philip" should be noted. Thackeray had mainly illustrated his own works. He was a most facile designer, probably too facile. Planché, whose recollections of him went back to the time when he was a "slim young man, rather taciturn," in Paris, says: "Drawing appeared to be his favourite

[1] He had intended, as far back as 1857, to complete the "Shabby-Genteel Story," interrupted, as he then said, "at a sad period of the writer's own life" (1840).

amusement, and he often sat by my side while I was reading or writing, covering any scrap of paper lying about with the most spirited sketches and amusing caricatures." Book upon book in his library was illuminated with his pictured marginalia. "The hours," Mrs. Ritchie tells us,

"which he spent upon his drawing-blocks and sketch-books brought no fatigue or weariness; they were of endless interest and amusement to him, and rested him when he was tired. It was only," she adds, "when he came to etch upon steel or to draw for the engraver upon wood, that he complained of effort and want of ease; and we used to wish that his drawings could be given as they were first made, without the various transmigrations of wood and steel, and engraver's toil and printer's ink." [1]

This clearly indicates where the fault lay. The intention, the impression he wished to render, were admirable. He knew what he meant thoroughly; and so long as his work remained an indication it was most effective. But for all elaboration he wanted the technical skill. The amateur's hand failed to carry to completion the artist's thought. Thus, in the more complex designs, the defective drawing is, if not glaring, at least apparent. Even so, however, as illustrations, as presentments in form and line of what he, the author, was describing in print, they are nearly always excellent. They do what a good illustration should do: they translate the thought into another art, show it, as one may say, from a different standpoint. And in the slighter sketches, the initial designed letters to the chapters, wherever a quaint fancy, a dainty suggestiveness,

[1] Preface to "Orphan of Pimlico."

an arch or frolicsome humour, would do duty for sound draftsmanship, there Thackeray was delightful. One looks through these designs with an ever-renewed pleasure. In "The Newcomes," however, he seems to have mistrusted his own skill, and the illustrations were intrusted to Richard Doyle, whose art partook very much of the nature of Thackeray's own. Perhaps he drew better, but not so very much better, though Thackeray generously said, "He does beautifully and easily what I wanted to do and can't"; and serious book illustration was scarcely his forte. He was far happier in Queen Titania's Court, delineating fairy and gnome, all the denizens of Elf-land. Thackeray seems at first to have intended to illustrate "Philip" himself, in accordance with his more general practice; but, whether in weariness or diffidence, he experienced the need of a coadjutor to eke out and finish his designs. A young fellow of twenty, who had just begun to make drawings for *Once a Week*, was introduced to him for the purpose. Thackeray was critic enough to know good work when he saw it. The young fellow was obviously fit for better things than correcting and refurbishing. *He* should do the illustrations alone —and in the woodcut of "Nurse and Doctor" published with Chapter XI. in *The Cornhill Magazine* for May, 1861, one seems for the first time to recognize the new artist's unfettered hand. Nor had Thackeray cause to regret the change. That lad of twenty proved to be one of the best of contemporary book illustrators—I know nothing better than his pictures for Mrs. Ritchie's "Village on the Cliff"—and proved further, notwith-

standing his early death, to be one of the great forces in English art. His name, which one likes to connect with that of Thackeray, was Frederick Walker.

Not in "Lovel the Widower," not in "Philip," not even in "Dennis Duval" is to be found the flower of Thackeray's later work. That blossom, and a beautiful blossom it is, came up, I think, in the "Roundabout Papers." The French critic is fond of accusing the general English novelist of moralizing overmuch, of taking sides for or against his characters, and preaching either at them or through their mouths. M. Taine takes up this parable at length in his otherwise very able essay on Thackeray, and demonstrates, entirely to his own satisfaction, how infinitely less artistic is Thackeray's attitude than that of Balzac, using for comparison the utterly dissimilar characters of Madame de Marneffe and Becky Sharp. Nay, Thackeray himself, in one of these very "Roundabout Papers," makes a "clean breast" of it, and "liberates his soul" thus :—

"Perhaps of all the novel-spinners now extant, the present speaker is the most addicted to preaching. Does he not stop perpetually in his story and begin to preach to you? When he ought to be engaged with business, is he not for ever taking the Muse by the sleeve, and plaguing her with some of his cynical sermons? I cry *peccavi* loudly and heartily. I tell you I would like to be able to write a story which should show no egotism whatever, in which there should be no reflections, no cynicism, no vulgarity (and so forth), but an incident in every other page, a villain, a battle, a mystery in every chapter."

Then, after describing the methods of Dumas, the elder, of the Great Alexander, he says :—

"My Pegasus won't fly, so as to allow me to survey the field below me. He has no wings; he is blind of one eye, certainly; he is restive, stubborn, slow; crops a hedge when he ought to be galloping, or gallops when he ought to be quiet. He never will show off when I want him. Sometimes he goes at a pace which surprises me. Sometimes, when I most wish him to make the running, the brute turns restive, and I am obliged to let him take his own time."

A caricature even of the great novelist's later art, of course; yet a caricature, like all real caricature, that was not without a substratum of truth. But in the "Roundabout Papers" Pegasus might go as he listed. There was no reason whatever why he should pursue a straight or even course. He might wander at will. His caprioles were an added charm; his fits of sloth or restlessness, a matter of no moment. Here, to drop Thackeray's image, Thackeray was the essayist, and the "Roundabout" essayist to boot. Here he might legitimately preach, or moralize, tell stories, or meander into episodes, be the literary critic or the critic of life, talk of travel, or books, or men, or pictures, or history, flit hither and thither just as suited his wayward mood. And how delightfully he does it all! These essays have the engaging egotism of Montaigne, a felicity of language equal to that of Goldsmith, often something of Charles Lamb's fancifulness, and withal a charm that is all Thackeray's own. They are unique in English literature. There is nothing quite like them.

There is a kindly mellow wisdom too, a genial tolerance and forbearance in the "Roundabout Papers" —a something which suggests that, as he wrote them, the shadows were lengthening in the comparatively short

day of Thackeray's life. "His last fugitive pieces in the *Cornhill* have been almost sermons," said Newman, writing three days after Thackeray's death. A kind of evening feeling seems indeed to have been on him for some time before the end. "I am an old man already," he had said to Bayard Taylor, in 1857. Writing to Longfellow on the 16th of November, 1859, and asking for his co-operation for *The Cornhill Magazine*, he had remarked :—

"I intended, two or three months ago, to shut up my desk for a year—not write a line—and go on my travels. But the gods willed otherwise. I am pressed into the service of this magazine, and engaged to write ever so much more for the next three years. *Then, if I last so long*, I shall be free of books and publishers. I hope to see friends to whose acquaintance I look back with—I can't tell you how much—gratitude and kind feeling."

Trollope, who made Thackeray's acquaintance just after this, gives the impression, in all he writes about him, of a man whose life was in the past rather than the future. Yet at this time he was not fifty. But many things had contributed to age him before his time: the struggles and sorrows of his earlier manhood, an habitual disregard, it is to be feared, of the laws of health—late hours, want of exercise,—and lastly, terrible spasms of pain, recurring often at no distant intervals. Alas! he was no longer the "Fat Contributor" of days gone by.[1] It was life's evening with him indeed, and the night about to fall.

[1] "Dickens told me that, looking on him as he lay in his coffin, he wondered that the figure he had known in life as of such noble

With what thoughts did he look forward into the darkness? With thoughts cheered and made bright by a Christian faith and hope, undoubtedly. Writing of Lord Kew in "The Newcomes," he had said, "Those doubts which perplex many a thinking man, and, when formed and uttered, give many a fond and faithful woman pain so exquisite, had most fortunately never crossed Kew's mind. His early impressions were such as his mother had left them. . . ." And something of the same kind may be said of Thackeray himself. There is no evidence in his works of any passionate struggle between belief and disbelief. None of his characters go through that fiery trial. He never seems to have anticipated in any way the religious problems that perplex this generation, and are debated in magazines, reviews, newspapers, novels. God's providence, Christ's mission to mankind, man's future life—all these he takes habitually for granted. Arthur Pendennis is the one of his creations in which he unquestionably put most of himself, and he does not fear to show us Arthur, more than once, in moments of great feeling or great sorrow, kneeling down in prayer:—

"As they were talking the clock struck nine, and Helen reminded him how, when he was a little boy, she used to go up to his bedroom at that hour, and hear him say 'Our Father.' And once more, oh, once more the young man fell down at his mother's sacred knees, and sobbed out the prayer which the Divine Tenderness uttered for us, and which has been echoed for twenty ages since

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presence could seem so shrunken and wasted" (Fields' "Yesterdays with Authors"). His hands, it was remarked, were quite thin, like those of an old man of eighty.

by millions of sinful and humbled men. And as he spoke the last words of the supplication, the mother's head fell down on her boy's, and her arms closed round him, and together they repeated the words 'for ever and ever,' and 'Amen.'"

Would the reader like to be made to feel how much the world has advanced—or, if you prefer it, gone back—in the last forty years? I take up a story by Mr. Besant, "Katharine Regina." The hero here, too, is a journalist, like Arthur Pendennis, and is placed in a position of the most terrible grief and perplexity—the girl he loves being lost, swallowed up in the great desert of London. He cries out in bitterness of soul, and an old lady speaks to him thus:—

"'Mr. Addison,'—she laid her hand on his—'I am an old woman now, and I have seen a great deal—my sister and I together—of trouble and privation. We, too, have been reduced to walk the streets at night for want of a bed, and to go hungry for want of food. Yet we were never utterly forsaken. Your Katie is not quite friendless. The God who rescued you from the Arabs will save her from the devils—who destroy soul as well as body—of the streets! Have faith, young man. Lift up your heart, oh, lift up your heart unto the Lord!' This language," adds Mr. Besant, "is not so common as it used to be, and is seldom used for the comfort and solace of a London journalist, who may chronicle the emotions of religion, but is not often expected to feel them."

Mark the contrast; and it is all the more striking because Mr. Besant writes of the old faith in no spirit of hostility, but, on the contrary, with such a keen perception of its ennobling effect on human character. Forty years ago it was held natural for Arthur Pendennis to kneel down in prayer. Now it is thought

odd and quaint that any form of religious consolation should be proposed to Tom Addison.

So Thackeray, to whom the modern doubt had not come, held to the old faith, and thought of death not gloomily but with a cheerful trust and hope. Writing to Mr. Reed, who had just lost his brother, he said :—

"That ghastly struggle over, who would pity any man that departs? It is the survivors one commiserates. . . . But that loss, what a gain to him! A just man summoned by God,—for what purpose can he go but to meet the Divine love and goodness? I never think about deploring such; and as you and I send for our children, meaning them only love and kindness, how much more Pater Noster? So we say, and weep the beloved ones whom we lose all the same with the natural selfish sorrow; as you, I dare say, will have a heavy heart when your daughter marries and leaves you. . . . We parted with a great deal of kindness, please God, and friendly talk of a future meeting. May it happen one day."

Again he wrote to Miss Perry from America :—

"I don't pity anybody who leaves the world, not even a fair young girl in her prime; I pity those remaining. On her journey, if it pleases God to send her [he was writing of a sick girl], depend on it there's no cause for grief—that's but an earthly condition; out of our stormy life, and brought nearer the Divine light and warmth, there must be a serene climate. Can't you fancy sailing into the calm? Would you care about going on the voyage, only for the dear souls left on the other shore?"

He had given up the editorship of *The Cornhill Magazine* in March, 1862—at least his valedictory address to "contributors and correspondents" is dated the 18th of that month; and at about the same date, as I gather, had moved from Onslow Square to his new home at Palace Green. This was, and is, a noble dwelling, built, most appropriately, in the style of

Queen Anne's day, and of red brick; and his friends debated much whether he was justified in housing himself so sumptuously—the issue proving, however, that he was right, for the house was sold at a considerable profit after his death. Several kindly acts are noted as belonging to these last few months of his life. On the 1st of December, 1862, at the request of Archdeacon Sinclair, he so far put aside his constitutional timidity, to say nothing of an attack of illness, as to address, "with much emphasis, a few weighty and well-considered sentences" to a public meeting in the Vestry Hall at Kensington, on behalf of the sufferers by the cotton famine, he himself subscribing £50.[1] In the following May there was an exhibition of Cruikshank's works—an exhibition which proved to be no great success—and "kind Thackeray," we are told, "came with his grave face, and looked through the little gallery, and went off to write one of his charming essays, which appeared in *The Times*" of May 15th,[2] thus doing what he could for an old great artist fallen on somewhat evil times. On the 16th of December he was dining, very cheerfully and pleasantly, at the Garrick Club, "pretending," records one who was present, "to incite one very old friend to give a party of an excessively gay description, in order, as he said, that we might fancy ourselves all young again"—and subscribing for the benefit of another disabled artist. On the next day, the 17th, he dined with Dr. Merri-

[1] See Archdeacon Sinclair's "Sketches of old Times and Distant Places."

[2] Blanchard Jerrold's "Life of George Cruikshank."

man of Kensington Square. "As he entered," says Dr. Merriman, "I saw he was not well, and with his usual kindness he said: 'I would only have turned out to come to you as an old friend.'" But he soon revived, and as the evening went on was full of his old pleasantry. He "stayed late," continues Dr. Merriman, "and I strolled up Young Street with him; we halted by No. 13"—where it will be remembered he had formerly lived—and "he alluded to old times and happy days there; he told me 'Vanity Fair' was his greatest work, and 'The Cane-bottomed Chair' his favourite ballad; and we parted at the top of 'Our Street' never to meet again alive in this world."[1]

So, with fitful alternations of good and bad health, his life wore on to its close. "I saw him. . . .," says Dickens, "shortly before Christmas at the Athenæum Club, when he told me that he had been in bed three days, that after those attacks he was troubled with cold shiverings which quite took the power of work out of him, and that he had it in his mind to try a new remedy, which he laughingly described. He was very cheerful and looked very bright. In the night of that day week he died." Carlyle, writing to Lord Houghton on the 29th of December, says:—

"Poor Thackeray! I saw him not ten days ago. I was riding in the dusk, heavy of heart, along by the Serpentine and Hyde Park, when some human brother from a chariot, with a young lady in it, threw me a shower of salutations. I looked up—it was Thackeray with his daughter: the last time I was to see him in this world. He had many fine qualities; no guile or malice against any

[1] *St. Mary Abbots Kensington Parish Magazine*, Sept. 1889.

mortal ; a big mass of a soul, but not strong in proportion ; a beautiful vein of genius lay struggling about him. Poor Thackeray! Adieu ! adieu ! "[1]

And Anthony Trollope, writing to Mr. Synge just after Thackeray's death, says, "Dear old fellow—I saw him for the last time about ten days before his death, and sat with him for half an hour talking about himself. I never knew him pleasanter or more at ease as to his bodily ailments. How I seem to have loved that dear head of his now that he has gone." Gone, yes, gone, and the end cannot be better told than in Anthony Trollope's loving words to the same correspondent[2] :—

"I had better tell the story all through. It is bad to have to write it, but you will expect to be told. He had suffered very much on the Wednesday (23rd), but had got out in the afternoon. He was home early, and was so ill when going to bed that his servant suggested that he had better stay. He was suffering from spasms and retching, having been for some months more free from this complaint than for a long time previously. He would not have the servant, and was supposed to go to bed. He was heard moving in the night. . . . It is believed that he must have gone off between two and three, and I fear his last hours were painful. His arms and face were very rigid—as I was told by Leech who saw him in the morning afterwards."

"On the 24th December," says Dr. Merriman, "I was summoned about 8 a.m. to Palace Green to find him lying dead. . . . Life had been extinct some hours :

[1] From Mr. Wemyss Reid's "Life, Letters, and Friendships of Richard Monckton Milnes."

[2] Trollope's affection for Thackeray was beautiful, and throws a very pleasant light on the biography in the English Men of Letters' Series.

effusion had taken place into his powerful and great brain, . . . and he passed away in the night to the better country where there is no night."

Thus died Thackeray on Christmas Eve, 1863. Of the immense concourse that attended his funeral on the 30th of December—a concourse including so many of the foremost men in literature and art—it is scarcely necessary to speak here. He lies in Kensal Green Cemetery beneath a plain stone bearing this simple but sufficient record: "William Makepeace Thackeray, born July 18, 1811; died December 24, 1863." Only twelve months afterwards his mother was laid to rest in the same grave. With but one grave between lies his old schoolfellow and lifelong friend, John Leech.[1]

No biography of Thackeray, on anything like an adequate scale, has hitherto been attempted. This, which, considering his eminence as a writer, would otherwise be so strange, is accounted for by a chance remark of his—a remark, I venture to think, not perfectly understood. That a full Life will be published sooner or later may be taken for granted; and it were to be wished that the task should be undertaken by his daughter, Mrs. Ritchie, who has inherited so much of his literary gift. Meanwhile stray letters come to light here and there, old friends publish their reminiscences, bibliographers

[1] There is a bust of Thackeray by his friend and sometime neighbour, Marochetti, in Westminster Abbey. He left no will. The full inscription on the grave is "William Makepeace Thackeray, born July 18, 1811; died December 24, 1863. Anne Carmichael Smyth, died December 18, 1864, aged 72; his mother by her first marriage."

pursue their useful toil, new facts, of more or less relevance, are unearthed. In the foregoing pages, so far as I am responsible for them, it has been my object to collect these scattered materials and string them together as a fairly continuous narrative. I have allowed Thackeray to speak for himself wherever practicable, and always given place to his contemporaries if they had anything material to record. That the man's character was, in many ways, an enigma to those contemporaries seems clear; nor is it very easy to read it now. "I have known Thackeray eighteen years," Douglas Jerrold used to say, "and don't know him yet." Charlotte Brontë, during their brief intercourse, was as much struck by his strangeness as by his greatness. "Thackeray's feelings," she wrote, "are not such as can be gauged by ordinary calculation: variable weather is what I should ever expect from that quarter." And Carlyle, addressing Emerson on the 9th of September, 1853, spoke in these somewhat ambiguous terms: "Thackeray has very rarely come athwart me since his return; he is a big fellow, soul and body; of many gifts and qualities (particularly in the Hogarth line, with a dash of Sterne superadded), of enormous *appetite* withal, and very uncertain and chaotic in all points except his *outer breeding*, which is fixed enough and *perfect* according to the modern English style. I rather dread explosions in his history. A *big*, fierce, weeping, hungry man; not a strong one."

So he puzzled those who knew him; and as one looks at him through their eyes, looks at him even in the light of the knowledge now available, one is not surprised that

they were puzzled. There were so many facets to his character—he presented such different sides of himself to different people. Let us hear their varying testimony. Mr. Yates, as we have seen, in the peccant article of 1858 opined that "his bearing" was "cold and uninviting, his style of conversation either openly cynical or affectedly good-natured and benevolent; his *bonhomie* forced, his wit biting, his pride easily touched; but his appearance invariably that of a cool, suave, well-bred gentleman, who, whatever may be rankling within, suffers no surface display of his emotion." Mr. John Esten Cooke, on the other hand, says: "As to the general tone of his conversation, what impressed me most forcibly was his entire unreserve, and the genuine *bonhomie* of his air—a *bonhomie* which struck me as being anything but what his critic, Mr. Yates, called it—'forced.' The man seemed wholly simple and natural. . . . He smiled easily, and evidently enjoyed the humorous side of things, but in private, as in delivering his lectures on Swift and some others, there was an undertone of sadness in his voice." Or again, to take another contrast, Sergeant Ballantine, an exceptionally hostile witness, observes: "I never thought him an agreeable companion. He was very egotistical, greedy of flattery, and sensitive of criticism to a ridiculous extent. He may have possessed great powers of conversation, but did not exhibit them upon the occasions when I had an opportunity of judging." But here there is an overwhelming mass of contrary evidence. Dr. John Brown, Bayard Taylor, Mr. James Payn, John Esten Cooke, Mrs. Fanny Kemble, Dr. Merriman, Reed—a whole cloud of wit-

nesses—speak with enthusiasm of the charm of his manner, and the pleasure to be derived from his society. They never weary of saying how genial he was, how ready to please and to be pleased, how largely friendly and hospitable. Nay, as regards his manner itself, what different impressions it produced on different people! To some he appeared only as the conventionalized impassive gentleman. "I have never heard him laugh heartily, or talk vehemently," says an anonymous writer in *Lippincott's Magazine* for January, 1871. Wallack, on the other hand, describes him as laughing till the tears ran down his cheeks; and the impression produced by Fields' reminiscences is certainly that of a man who, belonging to a generation with more animal spirits than our own, knew how to be hilarious.

The truth I take to be somewhat as follows. Thackeray had an insight almost morbidly keen into the littlenesses, the meannesses, the weaknesses, the foibles of mankind. All the seamy side of life stood out in his vision distinct and terribly clear. But with this knowledge—a knowledge like that of the Royal Preacher for bitterness and sorrow—he had a most tender heart: "an almost equally exaggerated sympathy," says Trollope, "with the joys and troubles of individuals around him." Thus he was a different man according as the head spoke or the heart spoke; and sometimes, to the bewilderment of the listener, they spoke almost simultaneously. But any one who had once touched the heart, never again, I imagine, spoke of him as a "cynic," or doubted the deep sensibility that underlay his usually smooth and polished manner. Then it is quite clear

that, with a fund of melancholy in his character, he was very sensitive, very easily impressible — and, as should always be remembered, during the last few years of life he was in failing health, and liable to attacks of acute and terrible pain. Thus one day he would be happy, pleased with those around him, heartily taking his share in life's sociabilities and convivialities, the cheerful and chatty guest, the joyous host, the delightful companion—and the next, it might be, the mood would have changed, the cloud of disenchantment, or melancholy, or pain, come down in darkness;—and those who had seen him the day before would wonder at the change, and sometimes resent it.[1]

But such fits were rare, and surely most amply excusable. Of the man's loveableness, of the almost passionate affection he inspired in the breasts of many persons—some not specially emotional—there is abundant evidence. This, however, is ground which has been gone over by Mr. Merivale, in the concluding chapter of this volume, and I need not go over it again. Nor need I dwell, save for a moment, on Thackeray's family relationships. His tenderness towards his mother—the "fine, handsome, young-looking old lady," "very gracious" withal, of Charlotte Brontë's description—was very beautiful. One likes to think of her going to hear him speak, unknown to himself:—

[1] "So Thackeray too has gone. I was not surprised, knowing how full of disease he was, and thereby accounting for much of the inequality and occasional perversity in his conduct. . . . The kind, tall, amusing, gray-haired man . . . very friendly. . . ." (Lord Houghton to his wife two days after Thackeray's death.)

"After the fatal night of the Literary Fund disaster, [so he writes in one of his charming letters] when I came home to bed (breaking out into exclamations in the cab, and letting off madly parts of the speech which wouldn't explode at the proper time) I found the house lighted up, and the poor old mother waiting to hear the result of the day. So I told her that I was utterly beaten, and had made a fool of myself, upon which, with a sort of cry, she said, 'No you didn't, old man,'—and it appears that she had been behind a pillar in the gallery all the time and heard the speeches; and as for mine she thinks it was beautiful. So you see, if there's no pleasing everybody yet some people are easily enough satisfied. The children came down in the morning and told me about my beautiful speech which Granny had heard. She got up early and told them the story about it, you may be sure; *her* story, which is not the true one. . . ."

Isn't it all life-like and pretty? And as to his relations with his daughters—and surely there is no human relationship more beautiful than that between father and daughter—as to these relations, so far as one gets a glimpse of them, they have the same graciousness and tender beauty. He takes pleasure in his daughters' society, draws and writes for them, shares in their enjoyments, nurses them when they are ill, and, as is but natural, reads with moistened eyes the papers in which the elder of the two first gives evidence of her literary gift.

One trait more should be noted before I proceed to say a final word with regard to his style, and that trait is his great liberality. Evidences of it come to one privately, as they come also in the published records of his life. We have seen how, when still struggling himself against poverty, he had offered pecuniary assistance to Lever, to help the latter to come to London. We have seen him, still in comparatively impecunious

days, acting the part of Mæcenas among the poor artists in Rome. We have seen, too, how he indemnified the young bookseller at Philadelphia for the money lost over the belated lectures. He had helped Hodder also, as Hodder acknowledges gratefully. When his old editor, Maginn, was in the Fleet prison—brought thither only too surely by improvidence and drink—he largely assisted the beaten man.[1] These are but a few among the instances of his generosity. Free-handed, liberal, his kind heart was readily touched by misfortune. He was in truth a princely giver.

Thackeray's art has not, of late years at least, and so far as I know, been very seriously impugned. Mr. Henry James, indeed, with his graceful hesitancy, makes some kind of reserve, saying: "It would take more courage than I possess to intimate that the form of the novel, as Dickens and Thackeray, for instance, saw it, had any taint of incompleteness. It was, however, *naïf* (if I may help myself out with another French word)." And Mr. Howells, not without some equally graceful self-complacency, says: "The art of fiction has, in fact, become a finer art in our day than it was with Dickens and Thackeray. We could not suffer the confidential attitude of the latter now, nor the mannerism of the former, any more than we can endure the prolixity of Richardson, or the coarseness of Fielding. Those great men are of the past, they and their methods and

[1] Hannay says Thackeray gave Maginn £500; but how could Thackeray have had command of such a sum in 1842, when Maginn was in the Fleet Prison? It is just possible, however, that the gift was really made earlier—in the days of Thackeray's prosperity.

interests; even Trollope and Reade are not of the present." But this, after all, is not very serious. It only means, in effect, that Thackeray did not understand his art quite as Mr. Henry James and Mr. Howells understand it;—and in the house of art there are so many mansions! No, Thackeray's art is not of the past, except in so far as it deals, necessarily, with a state of society that has changed, and is changing. It is not of the past, because it brings before us a world that lives—a world in which the men and women feel, think, act, are real, exhibit the essential changeless passions of humanity. Flaubert adopts towards Madame Bovary the attitude of a purely unmoved spectator. Thackeray is no unmoved spectator of the career of Becky Sharp, Blanche Amory, or Beatrix Esmonde: he takes the keenest interest in it. But what of that? Surely the product, rather than the attitude of the artist, is in this matter the final test. If Thackeray's characters live, as they do—if they are characters worthy to interest us, and so drawn that they do interest us—if the adventures through which they pass, and the scenes in which they figure, are so devised as to exhibit them in all their development, and are moreover described admirably—if thus much be realized, what can Thackeray's own attitude matter, even if we make the very large admission that it was mistaken? But it was not mistaken—or rather, in the large world of art, it was an attitude perfectly admissible. Granted that the showman sometimes lectured too much, especially in later times, yet he had right of speech; and with what essential modesty he addressed his audience, and how excellent

the truths he taught! Manliness, modesty, unworldliness, the claims of love as opposed to the claims of self-interest, truth, honour, uprightness, woman's purity—these, let French criticism say what it will,—and I am not here addressing our American brothers—these are not of the past, or, if they be of the past, then is man's future dark indeed.

And of the more purely literary artist that was in Thackeray, the "stylist," to use the modern word, what praise can be too high? "Nobody in our day wrote, I should say, with such perfection of style," was Carlyle's verdict, and Carlyle was no flatterer. His prose is simply admirable. Without effort, without undue emphasis or straining, and by the use of means seemingly simple, and language almost colloquial, it reaches the very highest beauty. It is eloquent where eloquence is needed, but eloquent in a way that suggests nerve and sinew rather than brawn and muscle. It follows unerringly the writer's thought, sprightly where he is gay, serious in his moods of sadness, persuasive when he wishes to convince. It is clear as crystal always, and yet sparkles with felicities of diction, that seem to bubble up spontaneous and unsought. It has the highest artistic finish without being finikin or artificial. It never cloys by sameness, or startles by an affectation of novelty. It has a beautiful music of its own, a music akin to that of the masters in the sister-art, inasmuch as its cadences seem unforeseen, yet always satisfy the ear. It belongs to the best family of English classic prose, and follows in lineal descent from the prose of Latimer, Addison, Steele, Swift, Sterne, Fielding,

Goldsmith, and Lamb. But, like all of best and highest, it is individual, it has a special character : it is Thackeray's and none other's. And because this prose was so beautiful, so delicately perfect, therefore Thackeray, or so it seems to me, is rightly to be regarded as the first English prose classic of this century.

CHAPTER XII.

(*THACKERAY'S FRIENDSHIPS.*)

(By Herman Merivale.)

Section I.

OF Thackeray's personal tenderness for his chosen friends there are many things upon record. If he loved not many, he loved well; and from the day when, with touching solicitude, he gave up a whole morning of classical study at Cambridge because Badger didn't feel well, the story of his friendships is the same. Venables and Leech keep up the Charterhouse record. Charles Buller draws from him the beautiful and reverent lines which are amongst the best known of his earnest posies:

> "Who knows the inscrutable design?
> Blessèd be he who took and gave:
> Why should your mother, Charles, not mine,
> Be weeping at her darling's grave?"

Mr. Brookfield is "Reverence" and "Vieux," and "dear old William" and "Mr. Inspector Brookfield," while he is himself "old brother Makepeace," or "Jos Osborn," or the "Chevalier de Titmarsh," or the "Bishop of Mealy Potatoes"; or "Clarence Bulbul," when he has

to meet Jenny Lind at Benedict's. His fancy is always at play on matters of this kind, and it is with a genuine sense of disappointment that he describes how he once was a guest at Sir George Napier's with the great Macaulay, and a lady was expected whose desire in life was to meet them both. He proposed that they should change identities for the occasion, but the historian solemnly declared that he did not approve of practical jokes. Even so did it befall the rash visitor who at a Scotch dinner said that he felt himself to be among the sons of Burns, to be promptly assured by the whole company that that was impossible, because he left none. It is never prudent to joke with a Scotchman; with an Englishman it is not always wise to try it. These Brookfield letters teem with such pleasant strokes of self-description. "I tell you and William most things," he writes. But except for some hasty personal expressions, which any one might drop in confidence without meaning them, and many tiny gossips for a lady-gossip's private ear, the lovers of the man are glad to feel that there is no passage in them which can do anything but raise him yet in their opinion, for his liquid style and poetic descriptions, his bubbling humour, his sturdy friendship, his reverence, his manhood, and his truth. He liked to hear and to tell of kind things, he says; and in that spirit, so honourable to both, he writes how another friend, "Big Higgins," the Jacob Omnium of *The Times*, who was rich in the world's goods, offered to lend him the money to lie fallow for a year if he wished, as he had himself much more than he wanted. Among his, Thackeray's, aversions at one time was the

well-hated Croker; and a common friend of the two, in defending him, told Thackeray how Croker had one day, in his presence, begged his wife to find out some of the homeless youngsters who must be quartered in the boy-schools round, and have them over from Saturday to Monday. "They'll destroy your flower-beds and upset my inkstands," he said, "but we can help them more than they can hurt us." Always a child-lover, Thackeray choked a little at the story, and insisted on at once being taken to Mrs. Croker, who happened to be living in Kensington Palace, by which he and his friend were walking at the time, and making his peace then and there for ever having thought or written that her husband wanted heart.

"That good, serene old man," he writes when he learns the death of Horace Smith, of "Rejected Addresses,"

> "who went out of the world in charity with all in it, and having shown through his life, as far as I knew it, quite a delightful love of God's works and creatures—a true, loyal, Christian man. So was Morier, of a different order, but possessing that precious natural quality of love, which is awarded to some lucky minds such as these, Charles Lamb's, and one or two more in our trade; to many amongst the parsons, I think; to a friend of yours by the name of Makepeace perhaps, but not unalloyed to this one. O God! purify it, and make my heart clean."

How beautiful that worship of the quality of Love, pure and unstrained as that of her twin-sister Mercy. Blame not too much the noble army of backbiters, the unkindly critic, or the ungenerous churl. It is not their fault—it may be. They have not the quality of Love, that is all. How characteristic the self-depreciation which

grudges that honour to himself. I never in my life knew a man who had it more.

Horace Smith's daughters were among Thackeray's favourite intimates. It is pleasant to think that their Brighton *salon* still survives, after the fashion of the Berrys of old, to be the common Sunday resort of most things that are of good report in Letters and Manners and Diplomacy, and are drawn from time to time into the Brighton circle. "The most rooted institution in Brighton after the chain-pier," they called themselves to me once, in the predecessors of their present little rooms, where one sister sits in her chair to chat and listen about all the things and books that be, while the younger dispenses the tea and cake of sacred five to all and any guests who come to ask for them. Such a Brightonian as Thackeray was led naturally to frequent their rooms. It was to them that he confided how he was bound to produce the opening chapters of "Pendennis" within a few days, and had no plot, and no idea where-with to start one. Shade of Trollope how shocking! So then and there they told him a true anecdote of Brighton life. "That will do," said he, and went home and began the novel which afterwards, in defiance of all the laws of self-respecting composition, developed into a work which has its merits still. In return for the favour he christened his heroine Laura, after a younger sister, Mrs. Round, now long since dead. It may be imagined with what interest the story was followed in the Brighton rooms. When first he visited the ladies after it was finished, the original Laura received him indignantly. "I'll never speak to you again, Mr.

Thackeray. You know I always meant to marry Warrington." In the same spirit spake Lady Rockminster when she accepted the young couple: "It is all very well, but I should have preferred Bluebeard" (her name for Warrington)—which proves, to my mind, that ladies do not always know what is good for them. Worth recording, too, is a story of Thackeray going to see the Miss Smiths when he was to give his George-the-Fourth lecture in the town, and expressing his relief that it was not to be in the Pavilion, as at first proposed. "I didn't like," he said, "the idea of abusing a man in his own house." Miss Smiths did I write? I trembled and said, "Why did I not say the 'Misses Smith'?" Then did I find that Thackeray writes of "the Miss Berrys," and was consoled.

Of Frank and Davy and Stunny, and the favourite chums, we have heard in another chapter. Thackeray was much, too, with Morgan John O'Connell of Liberator race, and much with my father, to which I owe my own young knowledge of the novelist. It would not become me here to write much of my father; for his quiet and unassuming life of duty done left but little public trace of his singular intellectual power, or of the silent influence he exercised over the public men and public life of his day. As Secretary, first for the Colonies, and then for India, he had the true governing work to do in *der Stille;* and I remember the pleasure it gave me to be told, by an old Colonial Governor, how in hard times beyond sea, when he had to take upon himself to do dangerous things which might well be disclaimed officially, he felt safe, if he only did his best and rightest,

with one strong support. "When your father was at that office," he said, "I felt like a man with my back against a stone wall." And my father held, I know, a large place in Thackeray's heart. It was not a friendship to be talked of much, for the two men had too much of the quiet side in common. The same philosophy—the same deep sense of religion—the same reserve which unfits for general popularity and makes enemies where it is misunderstood—the same breadth of mental vision and incapacity for meaner things—above all, the same pole-star, the Vanitas—and the same blessing of the quality of Love, made the still bond between them very strong. Like many others, Thackeray was much in the habit of referring knotty questions to my father, and often have I listened with boyish keenness to the table-talk between them, by turns grave and gay, fanciful and deep. This is no place for more of this. To a son's abiding reverence, that much may be forgiven.

One characteristic trait of Thackeray I remember here, which exactly illustrates his habit, so prominent in the Brookfield letters, of living with his characters whilst his novels were coming out, as if they were his substances and not his shadows. Probably all the true romancers feel this more or less, but with Thackeray it was very strong, probably from his fashion of living from number to number. Being "entirely occupied with his two new friends, Mrs. Pendennis and her son, Mr. Arthur Pendennis, he got up very early again, and was with them for more than two hours before breakfast. He is a very good-natured young fellow, and I begin to like him considerably." Then he goes on to wonder if Pen is

like himself as he fancies, and a little later we find him wondering what is going to become of Pen and poor little Fanny Bolton. "Writing and sending it to you," he says, "somehow it seems as if it were true. I shall know more about them to-morrow. I am asked to a marriage to-morrow, a young Foker of twenty-two." So once, coming to dine at our house, he said, carelessly, "Nice neighbourhood this. A young friend of mine is just coming to live near here whom I hope you like already, a Miss Ethel Newcome." It took my mother so by surprise that I remember her disclaiming all knowledge of the lady, and Thackeray's humorous moralizing on the vanity of Fame.

Another of Thackeray's allies was Cole, of South Kensington memory, and the inspirer of Mr. Punch's renowned parody—

"I built my Cole a lordly treasure-house."

He and his family were much at the great man's house, and I remember me of an amusing instance of his ubiquitous energies which occurred after Thackeray's death, at the marriage of his younger daughter to Mr. Leslie Stephen. It was a very quiet wedding in the early, almost twilight morning, in a restful grey church in the Kensington district so much associated with the novelist, and lovingly celebrated by the graceful fancy of his eldest and surviving child, Mrs. Ritchie. Very few of us were present, and it was almost dark. Mr. Cole had volunteered to give the bride away, but he was in Paris, and my father, who had been much with the

daughters since their father died, was ready to take his place. But when the words "Who giveth" were spoken, a figure, till then unobserved, emerged from the shadow of a pillar, and solemnly said, "I do." It was the hero of the Brompton Boilers, perfectly dressed for the occasion; and how he had crossed the Channel was never known.

An easy Kensington transition brings us to the "dear neighbours," as he was in the habit of calling them in many friendly notes, Sir Theodore Martin and his wife, formerly the classic Helen Faucit. He intended, it is said, to dedicate his swan-song, "Denis Duval," to that first of Princess Rosalinds, past, present, and to come, and herself, in her studies of Shakespeare's women, a keen and sympathetic Shakespearian critic. I know of nothing in its way more true and delicate than her speculation upon the after-fates of Portia and Shylock, with its picture of the Belmont heiress playing the Lady Merciful after her own famous receipt, and never losing sight of the unhappy Jew till she had softened and reclaimed him. I think that this Rosalind understood Shakespearian women more delicately than their accredited critic, our friend Mrs. Jameson. And I think it possible that she understood Thackeray better also. I doubt if she ever said to him, "Oh, Mr. Thackeray, this will never do!"

The Martins were friends with whom the novelist was in thorough sympathy; and to Sir Theodore's kindness I owe some interesting facts which he allows me to publish. Of the little friendly notes which he keeps in store—they lived so near and met so often that there was room for little else—he sends me this characteristic

specimen. Sir Theodore had lent him Kaulbach's "Reineke Fuchs" to read.

"*December* 24 (1861).

"Many thanks for 'Fuchs.' I write in the twilight; all neighbours a merry Christmas. Off in half an hour to Boulogne. For all travellers by water—for all *sick* persons—please see the Litany. Adieu, mes bons voisins,

"W. M. T." (in the usual monogram).

The estrangement between Dickens and himself, rising out of the Garrick battle, ended in the hall of the Athenæum, where Sir Theodore Martin was the witness of his going after Dickens when he had passed him one day, and saying at the foot of the stairs some words to the effect that he could not bear to be on any but the old terms. He insisted on shaking hands; and Dickens did. "The next time I saw Dickens" (it was not long after), Sir Theodore writes to me, "he was looking down into the grave of his great rival, in Kensal Green. How he must have rejoiced, I thought, that they had so shaken hands." Sir Theodore, whose bond with him was nothing if not literary, thought Thackeray curiously free from literary jealousy; and certainly nothing bears this out more entirely than his casual remarks on Dickens in the Brookfield letters, such as "Get 'David Copperfield'; by Jingo, it's beautiful; it beats the yellow chap of this month" ("Pendennis") "hollow." Or this, which illustrates at the same time his careful spirit of criticism and proper estimate of his own work:—

"Have you read Dickens? Oh! it is charming. Brave Dickens! It has some of his very prettiest touches—those inimitable Dickens"

touches which make such a great man of him; and the reading of the book has done another author a great deal of good. In the first place, it pleases the other author to see that Dickens, who has long left off alluding to the O.A.'s works, has been copying the O.A., and greatly simplifying his style, and overcoming the use of fine words. By this the public will be the gainer, and 'David Copperfield' will be improved by taking a lesson from 'Vanity Fair.'"

These phrases are familiar through the Brookfield letters; but one can scarcely call attention too often to these unconscious pictures of himself and his opinions which a man sketches in the confidence of familiar intimacy, with none of the colour which the best of us must sometimes use when painting for exhibition. This form of literary reverence was with Thackeray always the same. A popular novelist, in the presence of a loved friend of Thackeray, one day justified something he had said, or done, or written, by remarking, "Sir Walter Scott said, or did, or wrote, so-and-so." "I do not think," answered Thackeray, "that it becomes either you or me to speak of Sir Walter Scott as if we were his equals. Such men as you or I should take off our hats at the very mention of his name." In the spiritual presence of either I think that we should take off ours.

Another curious incident in Thackeray's intercourse with Sir Theodore Martin, which has not been published before, I tell on his authority, and with Mrs. Ritchie's permission. It is interesting because it does, for once, bring home one of his character-bits to the original. The two were walking one afternoon through the playrooms at Spa—I tell the story in Sir Theodore's words, for I am not like to find better—and stopped at the Rouge et

Noir table to look on. Thackeray touched his elbow, and asked him to look at a tall man, in a seedy brown frock-coat, at the other end of the table. The man's appearance was that of a broken-down gentleman, who had still the remains of a certain distinction of manner. They walked away, and Thackeray said, "That was the original of my Deuceace; I have not seen him since the day he drove me down in his cabriolet to my broker's in the City, where I sold out my patrimony and handed it over to him." Thackeray then added that this man and another had, in the early days, knowing that he had money when he came of age, induced him to play écarté with them, letting him win at first and leading him on until they had eased him, not literally of his patrimony, but of a round fifteen hundred pounds. His losses were otherwise caused by the *Constitutional*, and an India Bank, and other unlucky ventures of his own or his guardians. No doubt, in that graphic history of the Bundelcund Bank, he had his own Rummun Loll, as he had his own Deuceace. But there was no bitterness in his heart or voice, says Sir Theodore, only pity, as he remarked of his old acquaintance at Spa: "Poor devil! my money doesn't seem to have thriven with him!" The same courteous informant writes to me:—

"You are quite safe in saying that Deuceace was drawn from life. I am *quite* sure of what I told you. Well do I remember, as we walked out into the soft, sweet air of a summer evening, how a sort of sadness seemed to settle upon Thackeray, as if the recollection of what he told me had been too much for him; and he said, although it was quite early, 'I think I'll go home to my hotel,' which he did. He told me other things in his life of a very striking

kind, but I know they were meant for myself alone. Poor fellow, he had some terribly bitter experiences."

Bitter experiences indeed for literary capital! And there are people who still rail at him for not having been always "genial," and call him various pretty names for it. Good heavens! why the man must have seen life through a very mist of tears. To have the crown of human happiness, a happy marriage, turned to an enduring crown of thorns,—to lose home and fortune, prospects and profession, everything at almost a blow—to be obliged to give up his favourite pencil for the pen whose tyranny irked him even to the last ("I drew wood-blocks all day," he writes so late as 1850, when the established hero of "Vanity Fair,")—to fight without fear and without reproach through slow obscurity and cold neglect—to struggle for years with a chronic and a wearing illness, yet to emigrate on distant lecturing tours to win his children as much as he had lost—and not to be always gay? "Oh, Mr. Thackeray, this will never do!" But no, he could not be that; nor could he be everybody's friend. But he could live through all this, to die at fifty-two, with a spirit as tender as a good woman's, and a heart as simple as a pure child's, full to the last of happy fun. Saddened, but not cast down, chastened always, as it was said the Lord's beloved are, he returned that mystic love to the last, in measure even as he received it. Honoured and held dear by friends the choicest and the worthiest, he kept them in a sense so wonderful that after five-and-twenty years of Death he is more alive with them than half the dwellers upon earth. "Heu! quanto minus est cum reliquis versari, quam tui meminisse,"

quotes from Shenstone another close friend, whose memories shall furnish forth another section of this chapter. And beside all this, in that short space of years, Thackeray built himself a monument more lasting than the sounding brass, if—as is the verdict of a great critic, John Brown (of "Rab and his Friends" celebrity), in an essay of no indiscriminate praise—"for insight into human nature he ranks second to Shakespeare alone." The essay is in the *North British*, and I have referred to it before. It is a lofty judgment, but not easy to dispute. And this was a noble and a wonderful record to leave, for the author and the man. Yet who shall say it Nay?

Section 2.

Yet another letter lies before me, which tells of Thackeray's alliance with another favoured child of Letters quite after his own heart. A merry Christmas chime of Thackeray's own, bright with the idea that must have struck so many of us who earnestly hold that rock-set faith, that of all seasons to fit the birth of Christ the best for us West-enders of the world is the true beginning of the promise of the year, which follows closely on the longest night. It is out of Sir Theodore Martin's archives, too, that the letter comes to me.

"KENSINGTON W., *December* 23, 1848.

"MY DEAR LEVER,—

" 'At Christmas I no more desire a rose
Than wish a snow in May's new-fangled shows,
But like of each thing that the season grows.'

Such are exactly my views, as it seems to me they were those of our own sweet William Shakespeare. Very well! Now I am very

energetic with regard to the right merrie time—Christmas. Yule time is so unlike *my* idea of the—the—the—let us say Dead Year: when the ivy overshines the wall: when her purple poison-berries shed: when under the holly's coronal the year has died. Ugh! Dead year, I like you not. But Christmas! Ah, that's quite another thing. Dear O'Grady, me bhoy, thin, ye must come here according to our agreement, sure. Be aisy, me darlint, and don't sthop away. You shall dance with all the girls in turns, and always have a nice one next you. You shall have the overlook of the children's feast—you shall: but come, and see what you shall do. I shall expect you at 11.30. Come—come—come—come!

"My dear Lever,

"Ever yours,

"W. M. THACKERAY."

It seems to me, the more I look at this man's work and story, and at the records and the memories of his friends, that a beautiful and chastened kindness is the background of the whole. "The Story of a Beautiful Life" it might surely have been called, and published as an ennobling study for any reverent mind, had it borne no other mark than that. This little letter bears the stamp of it. None of the hilarity to order, none of the pantomimic glories which have surrounded the sacred season of late years, till Christmas annuals and Christmas books vie only as to which shall come out first. Christmas will begin in September, soon; and, if it comes but once a year, it stays a plaguy period when it does come. The season of Prayer and Hope turns to the season of advertisement, and loses half its beauty in losing all its rest. That letter of Thackeray's has the true old Christmas ring: the ring of manly tenderness, and homely children's cheer.

"From my earliest youth almost," writes of him

another of his younger but closest friends, "I was an enthusiastic and, I like to think, a discriminating admirer of Thackeray. But it was not until 1849 or 1850" (just the "Vanity Fair" period) "that I first met him. It was at the old Fielding Club, in which, by accident, we found ourselves one evening alone. The great man fell into conversation with me, and I found his company delightful. Not knowing Thackeray by sight I had no idea who was talking to me. We left the club together at the small hours, he walking home to his house in Kensington, and I turning down St. James's Street on my way to my chambers. When we parted, my companion shook me by the hand very warmly, and said, 'Young 'un, I like you; you must come to see me. My name is Michael Angelo Titmarsh.' I continued to meet the great man occasionally, though our acquaintance never ripened into intimacy until 1852 in Washington, where I was for a couple of years attaché to the English Legation. In that year Thackeray was lecturing in the United States, and I saw a great deal of him. I married in that country, and wrote to Thackeray, who was in New York, to ask him to be present at my wedding. From a long letter in reply I make the following extract:—

"'I married at your age with £400 paid by a newspaper, which failed six months afterwards, and always love to hear of a young fellow testing his fortune bravely in that way. If I can see my way to help you, I will. Though my marriage was a wreck, as you know, I would do it once again, for behold, Love is the crown and completion of all earthly good. A man who is afraid of his fortune never deserved one. The very best and pleasantest house I ever knew in my life had but £300 a year to keep it.'"

The receiver of this letter, who may well preserve it among his treasures, is my old friend, Mr. Follett Synge, of the Diplomatic Service, afterwards our minister at Honolulu, and himself a well-known and able literary man, a son of *Punch* and of *The Saturday;* and the personal story which his affectionate friendship has placed at my disposal, shall be told in his own words, as I have told Sir Theodore Martin's, with the necessary adaptations of persons and of form. Authors, I hold, are their own best editors. I do not by the name of authors refer to the mighty tribe of soldier, sailor, tinker, tailor, &c., who write so much for our instruction nowadays, and want editing dreadfully.

To Synge's young American wife Thackeray wrote at this same marriage-time, a letter so kind and courteous, almost fatherly, that it is kept with the other as a twin-treasure. In 1853 the Synges came to England, and Thackeray, who with his daughters was paying a visit to his mother in Paris, saw their names in a list of passengers. He immediately crossed the Channel to see his young friend at the Foreign Office, then went to the wife in their lodgings and said :—

"My dear, we English are a very fine people ; but some of us are not so friendly and sympathetic as they are in your country. I cannot let you live here alone in lodgings, with no one to look after you, while your husband is at his work. You must come, if you kindly will, and take possession of my old barrack in Young Street. I must go back to Paris to-night, but my daughters and I will come to you as soon as we can. And remember that the house is yours and that we are your guests."

He would take no denial, and carried the young wife off with him. They remained in Young Street, enjoying their stay, and delighting in his affectionate intimacy, until the end of the year, when he would hardly let them go to take a flat of their own in Westminster. For many years he was a constant visitor at their house, and they passed a great portion of their time in his. He never came without a visit to the infantry-quarters of the family, who well remember now how the "lofty moralist" had to bend his head before he could come through the nursery-door.

Bits of his characteristic little notes of the hour fill many corners in the collections of surviving friends. Over and above the "Rose and the Ring," which disappeared from my stores, I must have had many letters from him in my boyish days, in the style in which he always loved to write to his boy-correspondents; and it was a great disappointment to me when, some years ago, I began to make my own collection of letters worth preserving for the various writers' sake, that I could not unbury a single specimen of "Thackeray's delicate little hand," which made of handwriting a fine art, as so many men of letters have done, to prevent their words outrunning their thoughts and their discretions. Thackeray used to say of himself that he could always make a living by writing out the Iliad on a sixpence, and some of the existing specimens of his letters are marvels of minuteness. One especially, written to Mrs. Elliott from Kensington about a visit to Clifton, which appears in the Brookfield collection, is a triumph in its way. The words coil round and round

like the folds of a serpent, in size scarcely visible to the naked eye. But the formation of every letter is perfect, and the labour must have been great. Only Memory keeps for myself the precious little copper-plates in fanciful arabesque, to ask me to a Garrick dinner or a supper at Evans's, or to some little home-gathering with the girls and other of his younger favourites, amongst whom—and a special and a gracious link it is—I seem the most constantly to recall Mrs. Charles Collins, the "Katie Dickens," who is Charles Dickens's daughter, and now, as Mrs. Perugini, a well-graced painter on her own account. No; I have lost my own treasures through some young carelessness of myself or others, and must remember them through the good offices of more careful trustees. If to his big boys he liked to write in copper-plate, for his small boys he kept "print-hand":—

"My dear William Makepeace Thackeray Synge,—I just saw this nice fish in a shop, and thought it would be a nice gift for my godson. Dear boy, when you have some friends to dine give them this, and when they have quite done and the shell is clean, I think you may make boats of the tail and boots of the claws. I wish the man had not cut the claw off. He did it with his great knife, and at the same time hit me on the nose. I did not cry much, and I am your true friend and godpapa.

"P.S.—*I* cannot eat any of it. I am glad."

At the same time he wrote to the boy's mother to deplore the destruction of joke and claw by the shop-man's vandalism, but to hope that his lobster might "look very well on a great dish, with a letter to Make-peace in one of the claws."

Let a few more extracts from this correspondence follow as they list, prose, or verse, or jest, as the fancy seized the writer, but all suggestive of the sunny ripple of kindliness and fun, ever at hand, to sparkle over the surface of those thoughts profound :—

"EDINBURGH (No date).

"I hope you and madam will kyindly dine with us on Sunday at 6.30, and do ask —— to come with you. His cheerful prattle amuses my dear old mother. My campaign has been glorious but not hoverendabuv remunerative. . . . If I get rich I shall lapse into hidjous indolence, and meanwhile am,

"With the highest consideration,

"Sir."

"BOSTON, *Jan.* 6, 1853.

"I am a bad correspondent; ask Miss Wainwright to intercede for me. Je vous félicite Monsieur: moi aussi j'ai aimé—j'ai eu vingt-cinq ans. My reception at Boston has been hugeous. Mrs. Lothrop is charming; and as to little Miss Molly she is a perfect pearl of beauty. I wish you joy of your own affair. What's ambition compared with that!"

"My DEAR S.—

The girls are out, but this I know,
To you they always like to go,
Make the day Sunday, if you please,
That is for Amy and Miss T's,
As for myself, I'm suffering: so
I don't know whether I can go.

Yours ever, W. M. T."

"SIR,—I am desired by Lord Palmerston to say that—perhaps you have heard of Miss Symons? She dines at a twopenny pie-man's; but when she goes out, to a ball or a rout, her stomacher's covered with di'mon's.

"I have the honour to be, Sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"W. M. TOMKINS."

"My dear Doubleyou, Doubleyou" [his friend's initials],—"I have just met a Trojan of the name of Trollope in the street (your ingenious note of last night kept me awake all night, be hanged to you), and the upshot is that we will do what you want between us. My dear old Synge, come and talk to me on Friday before twelve. "——is as happy as Lord Overstone with his (tell me if I put the figures right) £10,000,000. . . . When will you be back? I went t'other night to Cremorne, and found even that melancholy, and the sherry-cobbler, oh, *l'infamie!* I have bought twelve new forks and six new teaspoons. We have got a puppy. He fell down the area and broke his leg; and now, Sir, I must go back to my plate and to my work."

For letters under the visible seal of confidence this is not the place. Nor could their publication have any part in his friend Synge's wishes or his own. One's only desire must be to repeat nothing that could hurt the living or surviving friends of the dead.

"Not that Thackeray," as his old friend says to me, "would have deliberately written or spoken a word to hurt anybody's feelings. My uncle Toby had not a more tender heart, but he never pretended to speak always by the card, or to be more free from prejudices than Charles Lamb, who called himself a man 'with humours, fancies, craving heart, sympathy, requiring books, pictures, theatres, chit-chat, scandals, jokes, antiquities, whims, and what not.' It must be remembered that I was often, and for long periods at a time, an inmate of Thackeray's family: that he spoke to me out of the fulness of his heart, and very often regretted that he had been led by misapprehension to write or speak things which on afterthought he considered unjust."

A specimen of the poetry in which, at any moment the most unexpected, Thackeray liked to indulge may

be added here on the authority of the same witness.[1] A dinner-conversation falling appropriately on gastronomics, when opinions were being gravely given on the momentous matter, a fair neighbour appealed earnestly to him as to what such an authority as he thought to be the best part of a fowl. Gravely he looked at her, and said :—

"Oh ! what's the best part of a fowl ?
My own Anastasia cried :
Then, giving a terrible howl,
She turned on her stomach, and died !"

On another occasion his love of Lear-like rhyme led him, when he wanted as usual to help some poor soul in trouble, to translate some German verses to fit the drawings in the original book, and to get his daughters and his friend Synge to contribute some rhymes of their own, which combined to produce a popular nonsense-book, known to the initiate as Bumblebee Bogo's Budget.

And so, when he fell into Charterhouse talk one day before dinner at Richmond, he regretted for his friend's boy, who had just received a nomination for the school, that the days of breeches were over, and that the gown-boys had been consigned to trousers instead. After dinner, when the cheese was under discussion, Thackeray gave his vote for Brie. But there was none to be had. "Bobby," said Thackeray, turning to Synge, "will be like that waiter."—"Why ?"—"Because he will have no

[1] Charles Mackay says : "When I first made his acquaintance, Mr. Thackeray was known among his friends as the best improvisatore of his time ;" and Mackay adds that he was particularly happy in rhyming couplets on the company present.—F. T. M.

Brie-cheese." It was on the same day that a broken-down Irish gentleman, not unlike the great Costigan, fell into talk without being introduced. His brogue was thick and noble, and after a time he said: "Ye might not believe it, Sorr, but I'm an Irishman."—"Good heavens! You don't say so!" answered Thackeray. "I took you for an Italian." This playful love of Ireland and the Irish was for ever with Thackeray, and many of his Irish ballads are little less racy of the soil than Lever's own. But it was not understood, as he always felt he never was. His good-tempered banter was set down as mockery, and one day, in Anthony Trollope's stables, a curious old groom who heard Thackeray's name said to him: "I hear you have written a book upon Ireland, and are always making fun of the Irish. You don't like us."—"God help me!" said Thackeray, turning his head away as his eyes filled with tears; "all that I have loved best in the world is Irish." Much did he love to talk of Irish oddities, and during his American lectures was delighted to tell how, dining at St. Louis, he overheard one Irish waiter say to another: "Do you know who that is?"—"No," was the answer.—"That," said the first, "is the celebrated Thacker."—"What's *he* done?"—"D——d if I know."

For the story of his last parting with his friend Mr. Synge, I prefer again to quote the latter's account to me textually:—

"Just before I sailed for the Sandwich Islands," he writes, "and when I was staying in Thackeray's house in Palace Green, my host and I one day met in the library. He said: 'I want to tell you that I shall never see you again. I feel that I am doomed. I know

that this will grieve you; but look in that book, and you will find something that I am sure will please and comfort you.' I took from its shelf the book he pointed out; out of it fell a piece of paper on which Thackeray had written a prayer, all of which I do not pretend to remember. I only know that he prayed that he might never write a word inconsistent with the love of God or the love of man: that he might never propagate his own prejudices or pander to those of others: that he might always speak the truth with his pen, and that he might never be actuated by a love of greed. I particularly remember that the prayer wound up with the words: 'For the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.'"

THE END.

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[*In the compilation of the List of Thackeray's contributions to Magazines I have been greatly indebted to Mr. Shepherd's valuable Bibliography.*]

V. APPENDIX.

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